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THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHURCH

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BY

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"The course of lectures given on this Foundation is to comprise any topics serving to establish the proposition that Christianity is a religion from God, or that it is the perfect and final form of religion for man.

"Among the subjects discussed may be: The Nature and Need of a Revelation; The Character and Influence of Christ and His Apostles; The Authenticity and Credibility of the Scriptures, Miracles, and Prophecy; The Diffusion and Benefits of Christianity; and The Philosophy of Religion in its Relations to the Christian System.

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PREFACE

THE present book consists of a series of lectures delivered in January and February of this year at Union Theological Seminary, New York, in terms of the Ely Foundation. For the many kindnesses which I received during my visit to the Seminary I desire to express my warmest thanks to President Francis Brown and the members of the staff. To Dr. J. E. Frame, Professor in New Testament Literature, I am further indebted for much helpful criticism of the lectures in the course of their delivery.

My object has been to investigate the aims and beliefs of the Christian community in the time preceding the advent of Paul. No discussion of this dark period can be other than tentative; and I am well aware that many of my conclusions are open to question. They may serve, however, to suggest new lines of inquiry into problems of cardinal importance which have not yet been adequately explored. A detailed study of that initial period is more than ever necessary in view of the more recent developments of New Testament

criticism. Not a few scholars of the foremost rank are seeking to explain almost the whole content of Christian doctrine from the Hellenistic beliefs and practices to which the new religion was gradually assimilated. It may indeed be granted that these influences were operative from an early time, and have left deep traces even on the teaching of Paul; but they ought not to be emphasised in such a manner as to allow no place for a more primitive Christianity. Between the death of Jesus and the beginning of the gentile mission there was a momentous interval, in which the church grew up in its native Jewish soil, unaffected by alien modes of thinking. I have sought to concentrate attention on this fact, and to estimate its bearing on the genesis of Christian belief.

In my attempt to interpret the primitive ideas I set out from the hypothesis that Jesus imparted his message in the terms of Jewish apocalyptic. The application of this theory to the Gospel narrative has already led to many fruitful results, but its significance for the early history of the church has not yet been fully appreciated. I have tried to show that the apocalyptic conceptions of Jesus were normative also for his disciples, and found their natural outcome in the building up of the Christian community.

My thanks are due to my friend and colleague, Professor William Morgan, D.D., who has rendered me valuable assistance in the correction of the proofs.

E. F. Scott.

Kingston, Canada,
March 31, 1914.

CONTENTS

LECTURE		PAGE
I.	The First Days	1
II.	The Ecclesia	29
III.	The Gift of the Spirit	57
IV.	Jesus as Lord	84
V.	The Relation of the Church to Judaism	109
VI.	Life in the Primitive Community	133
VII.	Baptism	162
VIII.	The Lord's Supper	192
IX.	Stephen	224
X.	The Earliest Christianity	251
	Index	281

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHURCH

LECTURE I

THE FIRST DAYS

CHRISTIANITY, it has been finely said, grew up in the dark. A few years after the death of Jesus it had its roots securely planted and was spreading over Palestine and throwing its offshoots into the surrounding gentile world. It had developed customs and institutions of its own and a theology that was already rich and many-sided. But the initial period of which this wonderful growth was the outcome is almost hidden from us. Within a generation the church had apparently lost the record of its earlier history and could only replace it by a few doubtful traditions. All had come about so gradually, by a process so obscure and fortuitous, that even the surviving actors were now uncertain as to the true course and significance of the events.

That first dark period, however, was the most momentous that has ever been in the history of our religion. It was then that the church came into being and was moulded into the form which

it has essentially preserved amidst all subsequent changes. If we would understand the complex movement of the following centuries, we must try to know something of the influences at work in those earliest years. Theoretically, this is acknowledged by scholars; but in practice they have too often treated the first period as negligible, because it has left so little impression on the records. Sometimes, indeed, they have deliberately passed it over in order to enhance the achievement of the Apostle Paul. The original disciples, we are told, had failed to apprehend the real drift of Jesus' teaching. They clung to the one belief that he was the promised Messiah, but otherwise remained on the ordinary plane of Judaism, and would eventually have found their place as a minor Jewish sect. It was Paul who rescued Christianity and who may almost be said to have created it. New Testament criticism is now retreating from this position, so long accepted as self-evident, that the work of Paul was altogether revolutionary. It is coming to be recognised, in view of a more exact study of his life and writings, that he owed far more to the primitive church than has usually been granted, and that his relation to it was one of substantial sympathy. The gentile mission itself, it is now generally admitted, was not an innovation brought about by Paul. He entered upon it when it was already well in progress, and could only claim

that he had laboured in it more than them all. Paul must always remain the greatest figure in the early history of the church, but the estimate that would make him the sole builder is the result of a threefold illusion. He was the most brilliant personality of the apostolic circle; and the work which he shared with others has therefore been credited to him alone. His writings have been preserved to us and are our only first-hand records of the life of the primitive church; thus we infer that it had no other teacher. Lastly, the period which lies behind him is one of obscurity. Since we cannot discover how much was given to him, we are willing to believe that he borrowed nothing and simply originated whatever he taught. Before we can rightly understand Paul, or the great movement in which he played the chief part, we require to free our minds of these illusions and to allow room beside him for his fellow labourers.

The dependence of Paul on the primitive church is coming at last to be recognised; but criticism still insists on a dividing line between the primitive church and Jesus. It is assumed that after our Lord's death the import of his message became half obliterated. Another interest began to occupy the minds of his followers, and from this, much more than from his own teaching, the new movement took its departure. Now it cannot be denied that this hypothesis contains a

measure of truth. There were meanings in the thought of Jesus which his disciples were unable to fathom, and his gospel, as they proclaimed it, could not but suffer an impoverishment. It was inevitable, too, that the events in which his life had culminated should partly overshadow his previous ministry and transform men's attitude toward him. But when all this is granted, we have still to remember that the disciples had learned the message of Jesus, and cannot have entirely missed its meaning. It is incredible that after his death they should have wrested his cause from its true purpose and changed it into something different. That they continued to cherish the message as they had received it from Jesus is no mere matter of conjecture. If direct evidence were needed, we have it in the existence of our Synoptic Gospels, which, on any theory of their origin, are based on the reminiscences of the primitive church. The community that has bequeathed to us these Gospels must have treasured the teachings of Jesus with a remarkable fidelity. Even the discrepancies in the threefold record are highly significant, proving as they do that the tradition was not a formal and mechanical one. The message of Jesus had worked itself into the life of the church and so passed down to the next generation as its most precious heritage.

We cannot be wrong, therefore, in believing

that, despite all apparent differences, there is an inner connection between the various phases of New Testament history. It has been too much the custom of criticism to insist on the differences. We are asked to suppose that Christianity advanced, not by an orderly process but by a series of sharp transitions—from Jesus to the primitive church, from the primitive church to Paul. At each of these stages there was a break with the past and a fresh beginning. But if the principle of development means anything, we cannot be content with this account of the early history. The differences are real enough, and it was necessary for a time to emphasise them; but the task that now devolves on criticism is to discover the hidden links of continuity. It is proposed in these lectures to investigate that primitive period which lies between Jesus and Paul, in order, if possible, to determine the nature of its thought and beliefs. According as we understand that critical period of transition, we shall be able to trace the development of the world-wide church from the immediate work of Jesus.

At the outset we have to reckon with a difficulty which might seem to preclude all investigation. Since the earliest period is one of darkness, have we the necessary data for any judgment concerning its beliefs? The Epistles of James

and Peter can no longer be accepted as first-hand documents; the Johannine literature, whatever be its authorship, is certainly the product of a later time; and apart from these writings we have nothing that even pretends to represent the mind of the first Apostles. But our sources, though meagre, are not wholly insufficient. In the first place, we have the introductory section of the book of Acts (chaps. 1–12), in which the author professes to set down the earliest events in something like historical order. These chapters of Acts are no doubt composed, in great part, of legend; but the primitive mark upon them is unmistakable. We are conscious that behind the idealised pictures there are authentic memories of conditions that belonged to the past. This impression, which forces itself on every unbiassed reader, has now been largely justified by the detailed examination to which the chapters have been subjected in recent years. Literary analysis is at best uncertain; and the critics of this section of Acts have by no means reached a complete agreement. Yet they may be held to have proved that in his second work as in his first Luke employed a method of compilation, and that he incorporated in his narrative documents of high antiquity and value. Some of these documents can still be detached, and can be assigned to a date when the memory of the events must have been fresh and vivid. Even those portions

of the record which bear the clearest traces of later manipulation cannot wholly be set aside. The author is working on material given to him, and preserves enough of it to indicate at least something of its original character. Again, the Epistles of Paul supply evidence of first-rate value not only for the contemporary life of the church but for earlier conditions. In several passages Paul refers explicitly to what he had received from the Apostles before him. Attentive study of his writings can discover many other passages in which the reference is implied although not directly expressed. Indeed, it may be affirmed that the teaching of the primitive church forms a constant background to the Apostle's thought. Even in his statement of doctrines which are characteristically his own we can make out a penumbra—a suggestion of older and simpler ideas which he was seeking to interpret. Our third source is the Synoptic Gospels. Their very existence, as has been said already, is a fact of the highest importance for the understanding of the apostolic age. We are reminded that the teaching of Jesus was a living power in the church and that all its beliefs and activities were influenced directly by that teaching. But in a more definite manner the Gospels throw a light on the beginnings of Christian history. Into its recollections of the life of Jesus the church unconsciously transfused some portion of its own life.

Incidents were described from the point of view of actual conditions; sayings were adapted so as to bear more immediately on present difficulties and needs; later reflection on the Gospel story was thrown back on the historical picture. There can be little doubt that the narrative as we now have it contains a large deposit from the early history of the church; but the task of sifting out the accretions from the original substance is one of extreme delicacy. It has certainly been carried out too rashly, and in too hard and pedantic a fashion, by many recent critics. They have set to work with a preconceived idea of what Jesus must have said and what the church must have added, and have failed to reckon with the possibility that he and the church may have partly shared the same outlook. But, although the task is difficult, we are assisted, in some measure, by the comparison of the three Gospels. In not a few cases their differences afford us a clew that would otherwise be wanting, and enable us to separate the thought of Jesus from the elements that filtered in at a later time.

These, then, are the chief sources of our knowledge. They are, indeed, scanty and their data have often to be pieced together by conjecture; but when we consider the obscurity which overhung the earliest Christian history it is surprising that so many glimpses are afforded us. Our concern is with the primitive beliefs as we can ascer-

tain them with the help of these sources. But it is necessary, in the first place, to direct our attention to the historical circumstances in which the church arose.

On the night when Jesus was arrested in Jerusalem, during the Passover week, the disciples, smitten with panic, had deserted him. What was the nature of this desertion? The Gospel narratives, in their present form, leave us with the impression that although the disciples fled they still remained in the city and there received the evidence that the Lord had arisen. But the evangelists wrote under various influences, which may easily have led them, at this point, to disguise or modify the facts. They may well have desired to mitigate the apparent weakness of the disciples—to assign to Jerusalem, from the very outset, a place of unique importance—to combine the story of the empty grave with that of the appearances. It is certainly natural to suppose that in the panic which overtook them the disciples made their escape altogether from the zone of danger and hastened back to their homes in Galilee. When we examine the New Testament evidence more closely we find a number of evidences which have survived the later editing, and which point to Galilee rather than Jerusalem as the scene of those experiences which convinced the disciples that the Lord had risen. (1) Mark

preserves the significant prediction: "After that I am risen I will go before you into Galilee" (Mark 14 : 28). Signs are not wanting (*cf.* Mark 16 : 7) that this reunion in Galilee formed the subject of the lost ending of Mark's Gospel. (2) In the twenty-first chapter of John, the so-called "appendix," which is synoptic rather than Johannine in its character, we meet with the tradition of an interval during which the disciples resumed their old life in Galilee and there saw the Lord. (3) The same tradition has left its marks on the closing chapter of Matthew (28 : 10, 16 *ff.*), although the original outlines of the story have now become much faded. (4) Paul, whose brief account of the resurrection is the earliest and most important of all, says nothing as to the locality of the visions, but his references would suit Galilee better than Jerusalem. He speaks, for instance, of an appearance to James, and there is no evidence that James had accompanied Jesus to the capital. Moreover, the "five hundred brethren at once" could hardly have been gathered elsewhere than in Galilee, where the majority of Jesus' adherents still remained.

What, then, was the effect of those appearances which in all probability took place in Galilee? It is commonly assumed that the faith of the disciples had been shattered by the apparent ruin which had befallen Jesus and his cause. They had accepted him as the promised Messiah;

but in view of his ignominious death their belief in him could only be restored by a stupendous miracle. The desertion at Gethsemane, followed by the denial of Peter, is brought forward as evidence of this collapse of faith. But we cannot fairly draw a large inference of this kind from the desertion. It was nothing but the result of a sudden panic such as might easily overtake a band of peasants confronted for the first time and in a strange city with the terrors of legal procedure. As the later events abundantly proved, it argued no radical lack of courage—much less a shattering of faith. If we can attach any value to the solemnly repeated statements of the Gospels, the disciples were already prepared for the closing events at Jerusalem. Jesus had forewarned them of a coming catastrophe and taught them that through suffering and death he would fulfil his Messianic work. It can hardly be doubted that the teaching of Jesus, in the latter days of his ministry, turned largely upon this thought; and any failure of faith on the part of his disciples could be only for a moment. Their mood, when once the crisis was over, would be one not of disillusionment and despair but of intense expectation. All had happened as Jesus had foretold. Their belief in him would be even stronger than before and would be only waiting to break out into victorious certainty.

The narratives of the resurrection are beset

with many problems, some of which may be partly solved by critical analysis while others are involved in a mystery that can never be lifted. For our immediate purpose it is not necessary to discuss these complex problems. One fact stands out clearly amidst all the confusion of the records and is now recognised by every fair-minded scholar—that the disciples underwent some experience which convinced them that the Lord was risen. According to Paul, who expressly says that his testimony was that of all the Apostles,* the fact of the resurrection was established by a series of visions of which the first was seen by Peter. Of the empty tomb we have no mention by Paul, although some have discovered a hint of it in his emphatic statement that "Christ died *and was buried.*" Paul speaks, indeed, as if all the appearances were of the same order as that which he himself had witnessed on the road to Damascus, when Christ was manifested not in the body which he had worn on earth but in a spiritual body consisting of heavenly light. But probably it was not till a later time that the church began to reflect on the nature of the resurrection and arrived at the theories which are suggested by the conflicting narratives in the Gospels. The original witnesses were satisfied with the fact. Christ had appeared to them and was therefore risen.

* I Cor. 15 : 11.

From the time of Paul onward Christian thought has dwelt on the resurrection and has sought to correlate it with the wider problems of faith and immortality. These later speculations must be left out of account when we try to estimate its significance for the first disciples. They viewed it, so far as we can gather, under two aspects. On the one hand, it inspired them with the conviction that Jesus was still living. Their fellowship with him had only been interrupted for a brief season and was now resumed, although he was no longer an outward and visible presence. They were his servants, as before, and could depend upon his aid and direction. In this belief that they were co-operating with the living Master we can discern the ultimate secret of that enthusiasm which carried them to victory. They were engaged in the service not of a rule or tradition, however sacred, but of the living Christ. Here, too, we may discern the secret of the progressiveness of early Christianity —of its power of adapting itself to new conditions and welcoming the new influences that might seem to be working for its destruction. It was not bound down to the past, for Christ was still living and offering a new revelation. His life as it had been was remembered and treasured because it served to illuminate his present and abiding life. We are wont to think of the mysticism which has entered so profoundly into Christian

thought as a later development. The first traces of it have been discovered in Paul, and are set down to his peculiar temperament and experience or to the ideas which he borrowed half unconsciously from the Oriental cults. But the disciples were possessed from the outset with a conviction which naturally took the form of a mystical sentiment. Assured that Jesus was still living, they sought to continue in his fellowship; and the outward communion was replaced by a sense of his inward presence. "Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." These words, although they can hardly have been spoken by Jesus himself, afford us a vivid glimpse into the minds of his earliest followers, to whom he was still the living and present Lord.

But the resurrection had another and more definite significance. It served to convince his disciples not only that Jesus was still living but that he had now entered on his supreme office as the Messiah. During the whole New Testament period this is the grand inference which is drawn from the fact of the resurrection. It is the crowning proof, the palpable guarantee, of Jesus' Messiahship. "If Christ is not risen," says Paul, "your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." His meaning is that the very basis of the Christian gospel is the belief that Jesus is the Messiah and that this belief is attested by the fact

of the resurrection. The earliest missionary preaching seems all to have taken this as its starting-point. Jesus was proclaimed as Messiah on the ground of his resurrection, and in his Messiahship the whole meaning of his gospel was made to centre. A question here arises which is of crucial importance and difficulty and which has never been sufficiently answered by New Testament scholars. Why was the resurrection accepted as the convincing proof of the Messiahship? According to one view, Jesus was marked out by this great miracle as a supernatural person, who could be no other than the Messiah. But it is doubtful whether the miracle in itself would have compelled this inference. We have evidence that the Jewish mind of the time fully entertained the possibility of a resurrection in the case of men specially favoured by God. Popular legend told of "women who received their dead raised to life again" (Heb. 11 : 35). When Jesus first appeared, as we know from the Gospel narrative, Herod surmised that this must be John the Baptist risen from the dead. The idea of resurrection was by no means so strange to Jesus' contemporaries that his appearance after death would leave them no choice but to acknowledge him as the Messiah. Again, it has been held that the resurrection proved the claim of Jesus because it cancelled the reproach of his cross. He had suffered as a false Messiah,

but God had vindicated him—had declared that his witness was true. The disciples may, indeed, have used this argument in defending the Messianic claim of Jesus against Jewish unbelief. It enabled them to show that the stumbling-block of the cross had been gloriously removed and that God himself had given his answer to the blind judgment of men. But to themselves, as we have seen, the cross was no stumbling-block. Jesus had taught them to regard his death not as a catastrophe which needed to be justified but as the necessary fulfilment of the divine plan. Once more it has been suggested that the proof from the resurrection owed its strength to prophecy. In Peter's speech at Pentecost certain passages from the Psalms are quoted at length and applied to the resurrection; and in the early preaching generally this line of argument seems to have been enforced. "Christ rose from the dead," says Paul, "according to the scriptures." But it cannot have been on the ground of prophecy that the resurrection was held to be the decisive proof of the Messiahship of Jesus. The Old Testament passages in question have no obvious bearing on the event. They cannot have constituted the proof, but were evidently sought out to support it by the ultimate authority of scripture.

Why was it, then, that the resurrection was accepted by the disciples as absolute testimony that

Jesus was no other than the Messiah? It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that they were influenced in the last resort by some declaration of Jesus himself. They were aware that he had foretold his rising from the dead and had connected it with his elevation to the Messianic office. In his later teaching, as recorded in the Gospels, he dwells on the thought that his approaching death will be followed by an exaltation. The Son of Man will suffer many things and be put to death, but will rise again and manifest himself in glory. The authenticity of these predictions has often been called in question; and it may be admitted that they have not been reported literally. They follow one another according to an artificial scheme and bear evident traces of later theological reflection. But there is no reason to doubt that they preserve at least the substance of actual sayings of Jesus; and they help to explain his attitude in the closing days, when he held unwaveringly to his Messianic claim in the face of impending death. The disciples, we may believe, understood the resurrection in the light of these anticipations of Jesus. He had declared that although he must die he would rise from death as the exalted Messiah, and now "he had risen, as he said."

The resurrection, therefore, was the triumphant proof that Jesus was the Messiah; but its significance in this respect needs to be defined more

closely. By his rising from the dead it was proved that he had now attained to his Messiahship—that the dignity which had hitherto been latent had become actual. The Messiah, according to Jewish expectations, was to reveal himself at the beginning of the new age, over which he would preside as the representative of God; and it was only in a future and potential sense that Jesus could claim in his lifetime to be the Messiah. He believed, if we rightly understand the obscure hints in the Gospels, that by death he was to win for himself the Messianic office, invested with which he would return to bring in the kingdom of God. Thus the resurrection was a necessary moment in the destiny which he contemplated, and his prediction of it affords no real difficulty. Convinced, as he was, that through death he would obtain Messiahship, he declared that he would rise from death into a new and higher state of being. These hopes of Jesus were familiar to his disciples; and by their visions of the risen Master they were assured that the exaltation had now been accomplished. The resurrection was proof not of something that Jesus had been in his earthly life but of the sovereign place to which he had since attained. For the first time they now beheld him in his true character as the Messiah. More than once in the New Testament we meet with an explicit statement of this conception, which seems to have been taken for granted

in the earliest theology of the church. "Let all the house of Israel," says Peter at Pentecost, "know assuredly that God hath made this Jesus whom ye crucified both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2 : 36). Hitherto he had been "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs"; now God had appointed him Lord and Christ. So Paul, in the opening verses of Romans, speaks of Jesus as "born of the seed of David after the flesh, but now declared Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." * To the disciples this was the central significance of those visions which they had witnessed. They were satisfied that the potential dignity had now become actual. Jesus had risen out of the limitations of his earthly life into the position of lordship and power to which he had been destined. His rising again had been at the same time his entrance on the Messiahship.

The appearances, then, seem to have taken place in Galilee; and in any case the disciples had returned there for a short interval after the Lord's death. Immediately afterward, however, we find them in Jerusalem, along with a considerable number of other adherents of Jesus who had not belonged to the inner circle. Nothing is told us of the reasons for this migration, which was

* Romans 1 : 3, 4.

fraught with such momentous consequences. Luke, indeed, who would naturally have been our informant, is anxious above all the others to disguise the fact that the disciples ever left Jerusalem.

How is the migration to be explained? According to one view the followers of Jesus were attracted by a natural sentiment to the city which had been consecrated for them by his passion. But their memories of Jesus were far more entwined with Galilee than with Jerusalem. By abandoning their native province they cut themselves off from the sacred associations of the past years. It has been more plausibly conjectured that they felt the need of a wider field of propaganda than Galilee could afford them. From Jerusalem as a centre they would be able to proclaim their message to the Jewish nation and to the world at large. But it is hardly conceivable that at the very beginning, when they were still overwhelmed with their wonderful experiences, they drew up a deliberate plan of action and chose out a centre for missionary work. Their choice, in any case, would not readily have fallen on Jerusalem—the stronghold of the opposition which had brought about the Lord's death. Another theory has been put forward in recent years,* to the effect that the settle-

* *Cf.* Spitta., "Zur Geschich. und Litt. des Urchristentums," I, 290.

ment at Jerusalem was more or less accidental. The disciples had been interrupted in their observance of the Passover, and availed themselves of a provision in the Law which allowed of a second observance at Pentecost. But in the time of Jesus the Passover pilgrimage was no longer insisted on, and the disciples would feel no obligation to keep the feast over again. Moreover, it cannot be imagined for a moment that in the first glow of their faith in the resurrection they were troubled by meticulous scruples about the omission of a legal duty. The true explanation of the removal to Jerusalem is almost certainly to be sought in the enthusiastic hopes which had now taken full possession of the disciples. Assured that the Lord was risen, they were looking for his immediate return in power to establish the kingdom of God. Where ought they to be in order that they might not miss him at his coming? According to a well-known prophecy, he would manifest himself in the holy city. "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in" (Mal. 3 : 1). It is told us in the early chapters of Acts that the disciples were continually in the temple, and this is usually adduced as evidence that they adhered strictly to Jewish forms of piety notwithstanding their new-born faith. But may we not here discern a reminiscence which had come down from the

earliest days, although its true import had possibly been forgotten when Luke recorded it? The disciples had hastened to Jerusalem, impelled by a sublime hope of sharing in their Master's triumph. Like Simeon in the Gospel story, they resorted every day to the temple, believing, like him, that they would there witness the coming of the Lord's Christ.

Another significant detail is preserved for us in those opening chapters of Acts. We are told that the community, numbering about a hundred and twenty in all, held a solemn meeting and, on Peter's suggestion, cast lots for one who should take the place of Judas in the inner group of the twelve. The account is evidently based on some primitive and trustworthy source, otherwise the obscure Matthias, who is never heard of again, would not have been lifted into such prominence. It may be doubted, however, whether Luke has rightly appreciated the motive of this election. Its purpose, according to the speech attributed to Peter, was to provide another official missionary who could bear witness to the work and resurrection of Jesus on the strength of personal knowledge. But if this alone was to be his vocation, there was no reason why he should have been adopted into the family of the twelve. Outside of this original band, there were not a few who were fully commissioned as apostles and who were far more active and successful in

apostolic work than Thomas or Andrew or Bartholomew. For the appointment of Matthias there can only have been one motive—to make up the symbolic number of twelve, which had been fixed by Jesus himself in order to signalise the nature of his community. We shall return to this point later, but meanwhile it is important to note that one of the first acts of the church was to restore the symbolic number. It was deemed essential, if the community was to answer its true character, that it should have a nucleus of twelve.

In his account of this incident, and throughout the earlier chapters of his book, Luke has construed the facts according to a given theory, and by so doing has altered the historical perspective in such a manner as to mislead all subsequent investigation. The plan of his double work—for the Gospel and the Acts must be taken together—is a truly magnificent one. He sets himself to show how the message destined for all mankind found its way to all, diffusing itself in ever-widening circles over the whole world. The movement which had originated in a remote province was centred at last in Jerusalem, and from there extended to the cities of Israel, to Syria, to the more distant gentile lands, until it became a power in Rome itself. It was, indeed, in this manner that the gospel spread, but Luke has exhibited the progress from the point of view

of conscious design. He regards Christianity as from the first a missionary religion. Jesus chose the twelve to be his Apostles, and immediately after his departure they arranged to carry out the great propaganda. Already in the initial days at Jerusalem they were looking to the future and laying their plans in view of it. Luke fails, therefore, to allow for the spontaneity with which the mission developed itself, and which is apparent when we read between the lines of his own story. The advance was not the result of design, but of the inherent universality of the new religion. It passed on from race to race by channels of its own making, and broke, with a living power, through every restriction which men had placed upon it. To understand the primitive church in its true character, we must divest our minds of Luke's theory. There came a time, no doubt, when the mission was consciously undertaken and absorbed the whole energy of the church, but at the beginning, as we shall find reason to believe, the missionary motive was entirely absent. The disciples did not feel summoned to carry the gospel to the world, or even to the masses of their own countrymen. They expected that in a few days or weeks the Lord would himself return to fulfil his kingdom according to his own plan, and their part was simply that of waiting for him. If new adherents were added to the church even in those first days it was not because of any

deliberate propaganda. The plan of a mission dawned on the disciples slowly and gradually, and in some measure through the failure of their earlier hopes.

This initial phase of the life of the church can still be distinguished in the book of Acts in spite of the meagreness and confusion of the narrative. The believers are a small company, gathered around their leaders, the twelve disciples. They are constantly together and pass their time in prayer—directed, we cannot doubt, to the speedy return of Christ. They throw their few possessions into a common stock, for the end is now at hand, and for the short remaining time it is needless to entangle themselves with the affairs of this world. Daily they frequent the temple, in the hope that perhaps this day the Lord will appear. This is the picture given us of the earliest period, and we can detect no trace in it of the sense of responsibility for a mighty mission. We have to do, rather, with a company of visionaries, full of an intense inward life but purposely avoiding all interests outside of their own immediate circle. The conditions are changed indeed when a few years have passed and we find ourselves confronted with the expanding missionary church which has taken the whole world for its province. Yet the later church grew out of that earlier one, and when we look beneath the surface we can see that the primitive ideals were

never wholly abandoned. The Christian church as it exists to-day bears the impress that was stamped upon it in that far-off time of its origin.

The conclusions we have thus far been led to may be briefly summarised. After the arrest of Jesus the disciples had fled to Galilee, panic-stricken by the disaster but with their faith unshaken. Jesus had taught them that he was the destined Messiah—that he would rise again, invested with higher attributes, and return in power. In Galilee one and another of the disciples were visited with experiences which convinced them that he had indeed risen; and the twelve, accompanied with some hundred enthusiasts, came back to Jerusalem in the expectation of meeting him. At first the little community was quite without plans for the future, and its whole thought was directed to the great crisis that seemed just imminent. None the less, the believers were unable to conceal the hopes that possessed them, and others were infected with their confidence. New adherents began to offer themselves unsought, and as these grew in number, and the Lord's coming was delayed, the mission assumed a deliberate character. A rude organisation, too, became necessary, all the more so as practical difficulties arose in the distribution of the common goods. Thus, step by step, the church took on itself the form of an institu-

tion, with its own peculiar traditions and its own practices and beliefs.

Our inquiry is concerned with that earliest period when the community was still in the process of moulding, under the influence of the primitive ideas. The period is a clearly marked one, ending with the death of Stephen; but how long it extended is a matter of dispute, which will never, perhaps, be finally settled. Our natural impression, as we read the book of Acts, is that of a considerable interval dividing the career of Paul from the first settlement in Jerusalem. But the result of more recent chronological study has been to throw back the conversion of Paul to an ever earlier date. At the latest, it cannot have been subsequent to the year 35—five years after the crucifixion. More probably we must assign it to the year 33 or 32. It is difficult to realise that the momentous initial period occupied only the short space of two or three years, but we must remember that in great epochs the changes that would normally require a generation may be crowded into months. In view, too, of the shortness of the period, we are compelled once more to ask ourselves the fundamental question whether the changes were so radical as has commonly been supposed. In point of time, Paul was separated by only a brief interval from Jesus; may he not have approached him, more closely than might appear at first sight,

in the broad outlines of his teaching? The answer to this question is to be sought, at least in part, in the study of that primitive community which forms the bridge between Jesus and Paul.

LECTURE II

THE ECCLESIA

THE followers of Jesus called themselves by two names, given them, apparently, by Jesus himself. In their relation to him they were the μαθηταί—the "learners" or "disciples." This was the ordinary name applied to the adherents of a religious teacher, and we read in the Gospels of "disciples" of John the Baptist and of the Pharisaic rabbis. But in the case of Jesus' disciples it seems to have borne a reference to the subject of instruction as well as to the teacher. The hope that attracted men to Jesus was that of learning the true nature of the kingdom and the conditions of entering it. In their relation to one another the disciples were the ἀδελφοί, or "brethren," and this name likewise derived a special meaning from the subject of Jesus' message. The kingdom which he proclaimed was to recognise no distinctions of rank or class—no other bond than that of love and mutual service. In his own company of followers Jesus sought to exemplify this new order which was soon to be universal. "One is your Master, and all ye are brethren." *

* Matt. 23 : 8.

These two names which Jesus had given were retained after his death and were in general use during the whole of the first century. They were at last displaced by the name "Christians," but this was imposed from without and was adopted slowly and reluctantly. If not bestowed in ridicule it was at any rate a sectarian name, marking the belief in Christ as the peculiar tenet of a group or party, and we can understand the unwillingness of the Christians to accept it. They claimed to form a society altogether unique in its character, and by this name they found themselves classified as one of the many religious or philosophical sects of the age. At the same time some term was necessary to denote the brotherhood, as distinguished from the individual "brethren" who composed it; and the term adopted was "the Ecclesia." It is hardly too much to say that in this name we have the key to the early history of Christianity. By the designation which it chose for itself the community expressed its consciousness of what it was and of its place in the divine order.

At what time the name "Ecclesia" originated we do not know, but it must have been employed almost from the outset. When Paul goes back in memory to his earliest Christian days he uses the term "church" or "church of God" as a matter of course,* and we may infer that it was

* Gal. 1 : 13, 22; I Cor. 15 : 9.

already established before the date of his conversion. He clearly implies, by all his references, that it was the recognised name of the Christian brotherhood alike in Palestine and in the various centres of the gentile mission. In two passages of Matthew's Gospel* Jesus himself alludes to the "church." We shall have occasion to consider these passages later and to question their authenticity—indeed, it is highly improbable on every ground that the name was ever used by Jesus. Nevertheless, it grew out of ideas which were closely related to his work and message. The nature of that relation will become apparent when we have examined the origin and purport of the name.

The word "Ecclesia," as it occurs in ordinary Greek, denotes a civic meeting or assembly. In classical times it signified the governing council of free citizens in a city-state, but at a later period it assumed a more general meaning. Thus within the New Testament itself we find it applied to the riotous gathering which assailed Paul in the theatre of Ephesus. It is important to note, however, that even in the later usage a suggestion of its original meaning continued to adhere to it. An *ἐκκλησία* was not a chance meeting of any kind, but a meeting of citizens summoned for some object that bore on their

* Matt. 16 : 18; 18 : 17.

corporate life.* It has sometimes been maintained that the name eventually given to the Christian community meant nothing more in the first instance than the daily or weekly meeting. But this theory is inadmissible on linguistic if on no other grounds. Some peculiar significance must have attached to the meeting before it could be described by the august and expressive name of "the Ecclesia."

In any case, the name had evidently a specific reference which cannot be wholly explained from its meaning in ordinary Greek. In Paul's Epistles it is frequently qualified by the added words τοῦ θεοῦ;† and it may be regarded as fairly certain that the term "Ecclesia" is only a shortened form of the full designation "the Ecclesia of God." With this clew we are enabled to trace it to its true origin in the Old Testament, where it appears, in the Septuagint version, as the equivalent of the Hebrew "Qahal." Two words are used in Hebrew for the community of Israel. One of them refers to the community as such, whether met together or scattered, and is rendered in the Greek translation by συναγωγή. The other is reserved for the actual gathering, for whatever purpose, of the members of the community; and ἐκκλησία corresponds with this second word.‡

* Sohm, "Kirchenrecht," I, 16.

† I Cor. 1 : 2; 10 : 32; 11 : 22; 15 : 9; Gal. 1 : 13; I Thess. 2 : 14; *cf.* Acts 20 : 28.

‡ A full and luminous discussion will be found in Hatch, "The Christian Ecclesia."

There are signs, however, that in the later Old Testament period the distinction between the two terms had ceased to be carefully observed. Books such as Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles employ "Qahal" freely, apart from any idea of a formal assembly. It had come to be an alternative to the other and more usual term for the community, although suggesting, in a more solemn and emphatic manner, that the community was called by God.

The Christian brotherhood, then, designated itself by one of the scriptural names for the chosen people, but why this particular name ἐκκλησία was preferred is not altogether clear. It was of rare occurrence, and is found most often in unfamiliar books which contain little of spiritual value. We might have expected that the church would rather have sought a title for itself in the Psalms or the greater prophets, from which it derived the main proof texts of its message. As a matter of fact, the name "Ecclesia" gives way in a number of New Testament passages to the prophetic name "the people of God," and this may possibly represent an earlier usage which competed for some time with the other. It is true that the unusual character of the word "Ecclesia" was itself an advantage, especially as the more common Old Testament term had been already appropriated by the synagogue, and some have supposed that the disciples purposely chose out

a recondite word so as to make their title more distinctive. But the choice of the word can be sufficiently explained from the accepted religious usage of the time. There are various indications that the Jewish teachers had already taken the word "Ecclesia" and stamped it with a particular meaning. It denoted for them the congregation of Israel in its ideal aspect as the assembly of God's people. It expressed the conception not merely of a community but of a holy community.* By the connotation it thus bore it commended itself to the disciples as the name which best described the inward nature and purpose of their brotherhood.

One further question of a preliminary kind remains to be considered. In the Epistles of Paul, as elsewhere in the New Testament, ἐκκλησία seems often to be used in a restricted and local sense. Paul speaks of the "church" at Corinth or at Thessalonica; of the "churches" under his supervision; even the little group of Christians worshipping in some particular house constitutes a "church." From this it has been inferred that the local meaning of the name is the primary one. Each separate congregation of the faithful was at first an ἐκκλησία; and the way was thus prepared for the wider conception of a transcendental

* This is demonstrated by Schürer, "The Jewish People in the Time of Christ," vol. II, Division II, p. 59 (E.T.). Schürer concludes: "Συναγωγή only expresses the empiric matter of fact; ἐκκλησία contains as well a judgment of value."

"church" which was reflected in all the separate communities.* But the name itself, viewed in the light of its origin, requires us to assume that from the outset the ideal significance was uppermost. A Christian assembly could be an ἐκκλησία only so far as it stood for the whole communion of saints and bore its character. The references of Paul to individual "churches" are found, on examination, to bear out this larger sense which was always associated with the word. When he alludes to the "church at Corinth" he is thinking not so much of the separate group of Christians as of the holy community which it represents. There is only one Ecclesia under many forms of manifestation, and in each of these forms the entire church is, in some manner, present. At the beginning this ideal unity of the church was the more easily discerned as it corresponded with the visible fact. The one company of disciples, waiting at Jerusalem for the Lord's coming, could feel that it constituted the "church of God."

What, then, was the conception which the disciples sought to embody in that name "Ecclesia"? The broad answer to this question is not hard to determine. The church regarded itself as a holy community chosen by God to inherit his promises, as Israel had been in the past. As in its corporate capacity it was the Ecclesia, so its

* So Batiffol, "L'Église naissante," pp. 80 *ff.*

individual members were the ἅγιοι, or "saints." They had been called by God, set apart by him for a special service and privilege. But to understand this conception of the church as the holy community we require to analyse it further. In the light of the New Testament evidence we can distinguish two ideas that were implied in it. Ultimately, as we shall see, they were one and the same, but they need first to be considered separately.

(1) On the one hand, the church claimed that it represented Israel in its ideal vocation. According to the Old Testament, God had chosen for himself one people out of all the nations of the earth, and in the observance of its covenant with God Israel was to find its true life and destiny. It was assumed in the earlier times that nothing more was required than a formal worship, and that the nation, so long as it maintained the ancestral rites and sacrifices, fulfilled the conditions of the covenant. But the prophets, with their ethical conception of religion, revised this traditional view. They held that Israel as a nation had been unfaithful to God, and had no more right to call itself his people than the surrounding heathen whose customs and morality it practised. Yet Israel was still God's people in virtue of the "remnant"—the pious and righteous few who stood apart from the general corruption. They were only a small minority, but they con-

stituted the true Israel inasmuch as they alone were faithful to the higher calling of the nation. In the sight of God the "remnant" was Israel, and through it he would work out his purposes although the nation as a whole must fall. This prophetic idea of an Israel within Israel, a community that was spiritually a people of God, reappears under many forms in later Jewish thought; and it was in this sense that the disciples advanced their claim to be the Ecclesia. They took their stand on the acknowledged fact that the true Israel was something other than the actual Israel. Age after age, amidst all defections and corruptions, God had preserved for himself a remnant in which were vested the hopes and prerogatives of his chosen people. It had now found its embodiment in the Christian church.

The view has been generally maintained, or even taken for granted, that the name "Ecclesia" was adopted by way of challenge and implied a feeling of antagonism to the nation and the national religion. As contrasted with the unbelieving Jews, the church, in spite of its apparent insignificance, declared itself to be the true Israel. But in the beginning, at all events, the name connoted no opposition of this kind. The disciples were anxious to preserve a friendly attitude to the nation and considered themselves a part of it. They adhered to the Law and the established institutions. They limited their activities to

their own country and were conscious of no mandate to the outside world. So far, indeed, from involving a challenge, the name "Ecclesia" was itself a recognition of the prerogatives of Israel. It was the Jewish people whom God had chosen; and the church, as the genuine core of the nation, was working for the regeneration of the whole and awakening it to the sense of its unique place and privilege. That this was the original intention is clearly expressed in Peter's speech at Pentecost, which has certainly been compiled out of genuine reminiscences of the earliest missionary preaching. "The promise," says Peter, "is to you and to your children"—Israel as a nation is summoned to identify itself with the heirs of its higher traditions. It was only at a later time, when church and synagogue had definitely parted company, that advantage was taken of the name "Ecclesia" to point a contrast. Paul now argues that only those who share the faith of Abraham are to be reckoned as Abraham's children. He declares boldly: "We are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3 : 3). In the Johannine writings the belief has hardened into a dogma that the Jews have now been rejected and that "Israel," in the religious sense, is equivalent to the Christian church.

The conception of the Ecclesia as the true Israel pervades the New Testament, and has con-

stantly to be borne in mind before its language becomes intelligible. Again and again the patriarchs are described as "our fathers." The division into twelve tribes is supposed to hold good, in some ideal sense, of the Christian community (James 1 : 1; Rev. 7 : 4 *ff.*). Terms and images are freely borrowed from the Old Testament and are transferred to conditions prevailing in the church. It is assumed that between the ancient Israel and the new there is an essential solidarity, so that the life of the one can be illustrated and interpreted by that of the other. This strain in New Testament thought has often been misunderstood, with the result that criticism has involved itself in needless difficulties. The allusions to Israel have been supposed to mark those writings in which they occur as of Jewish origin or as bearing in some special manner on Jewish interests. One writing in particular, the so-called Epistle to the Hebrews, has been universally regarded, until quite recent times, as the appeal of a Jewish teacher to the Jewish section of the church. But in reading this and other New Testament books we must take account of that conception of the true Israel which had now entered into the very substance of Christian thought. Long after it had become predominantly gentile the Ecclesia continued to be influenced by the ideas suggested by its name. In no merely figurative sense it conceived of itself

as Israel—one with the ancient community of God's people and heir to its privileges and traditions.

The belief which we have here considered had two consequences, both of them natural and intelligible, although they took opposite directions. (*a*) On the one hand, it tended to keep the church anchored in Judaism. The new Israel had succeeded to the old, and must preserve a certain continuity with it, or its title would be imperilled. There could be no question of breaking away from the ancient law and ritual. Those who sought membership in the Ecclesia must first submit themselves to the requirements of the Jewish religion, for in this way alone could they be incorporated in the stock of Abraham. When we follow the great controversy that threatened to break up the unity of the early church, our sympathies are wholly with Paul, and we are liable to do an injustice to his Jewish opponents. We assume that by force of custom they clung to the Law, in spite of the new faith which had made it obsolete, and sought to narrow Christianity into a mere phase of Judaism. But from their own point of view they were just as consistent as Paul, and as eager to maintain what seemed to them a necessary Christian principle. If the church was the community of God's people, it must hold to the Law; otherwise its identity with the historical Israel would be destroyed, and it

would forfeit its right in the promises made to the fathers. Paul's adversaries, it may be surmised, were far more influenced by a motive of this kind than by any conviction of the intrinsic value of the Law.

(*b*) Paul himself represented the other tendency, which was implicit from the first in the conception of the Ecclesia. As for some minds it emphasised the relation of the church to Judaism, so for others it loosened that relation and at least cancelled it altogether. The church corresponded with Israel, which God had chosen to inherit his promises, but what was meant by Israel? Not the actual nation, but the elect company of the faithful, who had realised the conditions of Israel's calling. Their right to be God's people was not founded on racial descent but on knowledge of God and living obedience to his will. Apart from the nation there had always been an ideal Israel consisting of God's true servants, and to this hidden community the promises had been given. Thus the name of Israel was emptied of all its reference to the nation and retained only its spiritual content. The church became a purely religious fellowship, in which all men of whatever race were free to participate.

These two opposing ideas were not long in declaring themselves, and their conflict and interaction determined the whole course of early

Christian history. But in the beginning their latent antagonism was not perceived. The church was content to regard itself as the holy community, wherein Israel asserted its true vocation and renewed on a higher plane its covenant with God. As yet there was no suggestion of a breach with the religion of the Law. The church was fully conscious of its call to the new service imposed on it by Christ, but it accepted the service as in some manner the fulfilment of the work of Israel. Hence the name which it chose for itself: "the Ecclesia." The new community was identical with that which had existed at all times within the Jewish nation and which was now advancing, under a fresh impulse, to the realisation of its hopes.

(2) This brings us, however, to another meaning of the name—a meaning even more significant of the nature and outlook of primitive Christianity. The church conceived of itself not only as the true Israel but as the community of the future, the people of God which would inherit the new age. In countless passages Paul addresses his readers as the elect, the saints, the heirs of salvation. He describes them as passed out of darkness into light, saved from condemnation, endowed with the Spirit of adoption, citizens of heaven. These terms, and others like them, have entered so thoroughly into our own religious lan-

guage that we scarcely pause to think of their original import. But they all run back to that other meaning which was bound up with the conception of the Ecclesia. The church believed itself to be the community of the kingdom. Here we discover the clew not only to many of its most perplexing phenomena but to its connection with the historical work of Jesus.

We know from the Gospels that Jesus came forward with the proclamation that the kingdom of God was at hand; in other words, that the new age, in which the will of God would prevail, was on the point of dawning. Strictly speaking, therefore, his message had reference to the future. The kingdom was yet to come, and he sought to enlighten men as to its nature and conditions and so prepare them for its coming. Nevertheless, while he proclaimed a future kingdom, he thought of it as so near at hand that its influences could be felt already. His miracles were the evidence that a higher power was breaking in. His teaching was the revelation of that new righteousness which would soon be established everywhere. It was possible for men to apprehend the kingdom as a present reality and to throw in their lot with it even now.

In this twofold aspect, therefore, we have to understand the work of Jesus. He foretold the kingdom in order that men might be wrought to a "change of mind" in view of the approaching

crisis, but he aimed also at something further. He desired, in the present, to build up a community that should inherit the coming kingdom. For this reason he gathered around him his band of disciples and imparted to them his knowledge of God and of the higher law. By renewing their wills and bringing them into fellowship with God he sought to conform them to the conditions that would prevail hereafter. The kingdom was still future, but a community was already in being which had broken with the present order and had identified itself with that which was to come.

It is from this point of view that we must understand the consciousness which found expression in the name "Ecclesia." The disciples were aware that Jesus had destined them to be members of the kingdom and that as his followers they had entered potentially on their inheritance. No doubt there was a meaning in his thought which they did not fully grasp. The kingdom, as he conceived it, was, above all, a new righteousness and a new relation to God; and his essential teaching remained unimpaired when, in the course of time, the apocalyptic framework fell away. But the message was given within that framework, and it was this aspect of it that chiefly occupied the minds of the disciples. They saw themselves as the holy community, the heirs of that new age which would presently be inaugurated when the Lord returned in power. They

felt that for them it had already, in some sense, begun, and that they had their part in a higher supernatural order. The apocalyptic mood of thought is now remote from us, and we find it difficult to put ourselves in the attitude of those first believers to whom it was an intense reality. We are apt to interpret their hopes and convictions in a figurative sense and to strip away what seem to us the mere fantastic wrappings. But in doing so we miss what was precisely the determining factor in the life and thinking of the early church. It looked daily for a tremendous crisis in which the old order of things would be swept away and a new world would emerge wherein God would reign. He would form for himself a holy people to inherit eternal life in that new world. And the church believed itself to be the nucleus of that future community. It was like a fragment of the heavenly order thrown forward into the present, and had mysterious powers and functions committed to it. Its affinities were not with any earthly society but with the assembly of the first-born in heaven.

There is nothing more impressive in the New Testament than the magnificent confidence which underlies the argument of the Epistle to the Ephesians. It is there assumed that the church has nothing less than a cosmical significance, representing on earth the same divine power which is working in heavenly places. God has

purposed to reconcile all the warring elements in his creation, and the beginning of this great consummation is his church. How was it possible, we ask ourselves, for the Christian brotherhood to conceive in such term of its mission? It was still an obscure and persecuted sect, and scarcely a generation had passed since it came into being with that handful of adherents in Jerusalem. By what strange development had it arrived so speedily at that lofty consciousness of its nature and calling? But the answer is that from the very first, in spite of its outward insignificance, the church had believed itself to be a supernatural community and had found warrant for this belief in our Lord's own teaching. He had foretold the kingdom, had called his disciples to possess it, had taught them that even now they might break with the old order and have their portion with the new. From the moment when they were reunited in Jerusalem under the impulse of the resurrection they laid claim to a citizenship which was in heaven.

The conception of the Ecclesia was thus a twofold one. On the one hand, the church was the true Israel, continuous with that elect body which had always existed in the nation; on the other hand, it was the new heavenly community. These two ideas, different as they might appear at first sight, merged in one another. When the prophets

distinguished an Israel within Israel they had in view the fulfilment of God's promises in the better time that was coming. A deliverance was at hand, but it was reserved for the faithful "remnant" which constituted the true nation. At a later period this thought was amplified and defined under the light of the apocalyptic hope. A belief grew up—we find clear traces of it as early as the book of Daniel—that in the new age God would raise to life again his servants of past days and unite them with those still living, thus forming for himself a holy people. This traditional hope was reflected in the conception of the church. It was at once a new community and a regenerated Israel, entering at last on its inheritance. The principles for which it stood had ever been central in the history of God's people, and were now carried to their fulfilment. Its members would sit down in the kingdom of God with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the faithful Israelites of the past. Thus at the beginning the two ideas of the new community and the true Israel coalesced, but they tended to separate as the apocalyptic mood which had fused them grew less intense. Conceiving of itself as heir to the historical Israel, the church took on the organisation of an earthly society, although the conditions of membership were now ethical and religious instead of racial. The institutions of Judaism were borrowed, with necessary adap-

tations to the changed requirements. The gospel itself was regarded as the "new law," and was exhibited as a body of definite statutes, like the Law of Moses. But there always remained the other side to the church's consciousness. Although outwardly a society like any other, it claimed to be invested with mysterious attributes and to be separated from the world.

From the outset, then, the church thought of itself as the new community corresponding with that supernatural order which would presently be revealed. Here we have a fact that cannot be too much insisted on, for the customary neglect of it has warped our whole attitude toward the beginnings of Christian history. We take for granted that the church entered on its career with horizons and ambitions which were in keeping with its narrow circumstances, and that it stumbled on its great vocation by a sort of accident. For a time it was nothing but an insignificant sect of Judaism and aspired to no higher destiny; then, under various influences, it grew to a fuller consciousness and emerged as a world-wide power. But the truth is that at no time in its history has the church been possessed with so lofty a sense of its calling as in those days of small beginnings. It held the belief that the world was face to face with a mighty crisis in which the whole present order of things would come to an end and a new age would set in. The people of

Christ were to reign with him in this new age. Outwardly they might appear an obscure and struggling sect, but they knew themselves to be "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (I Peter 2 : 9). They believed that already they belonged to the new order and had their share in the powers and privileges of the kingdom of God.

The ideal picture of the early church which is set before us in the opening chapters of Acts has fared ill at the hands of criticism. It has been ascribed almost wholly to the pious retrospect of a later writer, to whom the first age appeared as a unique period when the hand of God was manifestly with his people. Visions were then granted to the saints, miraculous energies were intrusted to them, which were afterward withdrawn. By marvellous signs it was made evident that through the church God was seeking to work out his redeeming purposes. Now, it is not difficult to argue that the picture must be largely fanciful and that the young community, struggling for its very existence in the midst of poverty and danger, can have been surrounded with no such halo as that which Luke bestows upon it. Yet in one sense his description is truer to the facts than the more sober and probable one which modern historians would put in its place. The primitive disciples lived in an atmosphere of hopes and visions. They never doubted that they

were endowed with supernatural powers, that they constituted a society which was not of this world. They lost sight of the difficult present, with its afflictions that were but for a moment, as they looked to the glory that would be revealed. It was this initial mood of elevation and confidence that made possible the subsequent triumph.

A discussion of the nature and purpose of the Ecclesia has been necessary before we could approach a question which is of crucial importance in the study of Christian origins. What was the relation of Jesus to the church? Was he in some conscious and literal sense its founder or did he at the most communicate an impulse which had its outcome in the later organisation? A number of sayings in the Gospels undoubtedly seem to indicate that the church was directly contemplated by Jesus, and that he laid down rules for its guidance and administration. But it is more than probable that such sayings, as we now have them, have been adapted and modified. At the time when our Gospels were written the church, as an institution, had become a central interest in Christian thought, and it was inevitable that references to it should be sought for in the words of Jesus. Precepts that had originally borne a more general import were now applied to the circumstances of the church. Parables of the

kingdom were so altered in thought and language as to foreshadow the later conditions. It is significant that sayings and parables of this kind are most frequent in the Gospel of Matthew, which seems to have been written with the requirements of the church in view and was accepted from the first as the Catholic Gospel. According to Matthew, our Lord on two occasions* employed the actual word "Ecclesia"—once in regard to the treatment of the erring brother and a second time in the famous promise to Peter: "On this rock I will build my church." If this passage is genuine, our whole conception of the work and aims of Jesus would need to be revised; for the words scarcely admit of any other interpretation than that which has always been given them by the church of Rome—that the purpose of Jesus was to found an organisation of which he expressly designated Peter as the head. But it does not seem possible to accept the words as authentic. They occur in connection with a cardinal incident impressively recorded by all the three Synoptists; yet only Matthew appears to know that Jesus uttered them. Not only so, but they are quite out of keeping with the incident, disguising its real character and breaking up a sequence of thought which in Mark's version is clear and intelligible. It is not too much to say that nowhere in the Gospels do we have stronger

* Matt. 18 : 17; 16 : 18.

evidence of interpolation than in this memorable passage.

That Jesus provided for the upbuilding of a regular society for the perpetuation of his work is hardly conceivable in view of the apocalyptic character of his message. Adopting, as he did, the current anticipation of a great crisis, already imminent, his perspective of the future did not admit of any far-stretching horizons. He looked not for a gradual development, brought about by historical forces, but for an abrupt change effected by the immediate act of God and "within this generation." Apart, however, from these apocalyptic hopes in which he acquiesced, the idea of an organised church was alien to the essential nature of his thinking. He declares repeatedly that all earthly institutions are part and parcel of "this age." In the kingdom of God the relations between man and man will be wholly changed, and there will be no place for the old social organisms. The very meaning of the kingdom consists in this—that men will yield spontaneous obedience to the will of God, and through love to God will serve one another. All the constraints imposed by outward rule and ordinance will be needless in the new age, when men are wrought into inward harmony with the divine will.

It has sometimes been argued that the universality of Jesus' message implied an anticipation

of the church. If he intended his gospel for all mankind, not merely for Israel or the small section of Israel that had the opportunity of hearing him, must he not have instituted a society for the purpose of safeguarding and diffusing it? There can, indeed, be no reasonable question that he conceived of the message as appealing to all men, and drawing multitudes from the East and the West to participate in the kingdom of God. To think of him as confining the number of his elect to those few whom he was able to reach by his personal ministry is utterly to mistake the purpose of his work. But it is not necessary to infer that he looked for the great ingathering as the result of a concerted mission by an organised church. To his own mind the truths he proclaimed were self-evident, and he may have believed that the world would spontaneously accept them now that they had been revealed. Or, more probably, he may have supposed that the enlightenment would be effected by some supernatural means after he had given his life as a ransom for many. In what manner he expected his message to diffuse itself we cannot tell, but there is no indication that he deemed it necessary to institute a society for this end.

It is impossible, then, to maintain the view that Jesus deliberately founded the church and assigned to it the work which it was destined to accomplish in the course of the long centuries.

Nevertheless, the church was his creation, not merely in so far as he gave the impulse that called it into being, but in a more definite sense. The new age which he proclaimed was associated in his mind with a community of God's people, and he sought to gather around him a band of followers who should be the nucleus of this community. We are used to think of the disciples as called by Jesus that he might prepare them for their subsequent work of Apostleship, and it is true that in the Gospel records they appear as helping him in the dissemination of his message. But it was not primarily for active service of this kind that he summoned them to his fellowship. His real purpose was clearly expressed in the significant number of twelve to which he limited his personal followers. They were representative of the new community which God would choose for himself, as formerly he had chosen Israel. Their vocation was not so much to proclaim the kingdom to others as to lay hold on it themselves and exemplify the higher moral order and the closer relation to God. "Rejoice not," he said when they returned from the mission on which he had sent them, "that the demons are subject unto you, but that your names are written in heaven." This was their real task and glory—to be themselves the first-fruits of the new people of God.

Jesus, then, had no thought of founding a

society that would perpetuate his work when he had himself departed, but the church was none the less his creation. The Ecclesia which grew up at Jerusalem and gradually expanded into a world-wide organisation was only the enlargement of that brotherhood which he had himself formed when he called to himself twelve disciples as heirs of the kingdom. It has been said "Jesus gave the promise of the kingdom, and instead of it there came the church." By this is implied that after his death his followers misunderstood or abandoned the lofty hopes he had cherished, and contented themselves with building up an earthly society. Between his aim and theirs there was practically nothing in common. But when we examine more closely into the history of the primitive age we discover the thought of Jesus still operative in the minds of his disciples. He had chosen them as the nucleus of the new community, and their work was influenced throughout by this estimate of their calling. They designated themselves "the Ecclesia." Their function, as they conceived it, was not so much to build up the church as to be the church. In course of time, no doubt, the earlier ideal gave way to that of a great society, formally organised and consecrating itself to moral and religious work. But while it thus changed its character, the church continued, and has continued to this day, to bear the impress of its origin. It was conscious

that although an earthly institution it was still allied with a supernatural order, which by means of it was realising itself on earth.

LECTURE III

THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

THE church, if we have rightly understood its original character, was the direct outcome of the work of Jesus. He had foretold the kingdom of God, and had chosen his disciples as the nucleus of the new community that should possess it. After his death they maintained the consciousness of their vocation. They believed that Jesus would shortly return as Messiah to bring in the kingdom, and that they themselves were the destined people of God. Though not yet delivered from the present age, they had thrown in their lot with the future, and had part in the higher order which was soon to be established. This was the constitutive idea of the primitive church, and in the light of it we are able to explain much that would otherwise be dark and unintelligible.

The conception of the church as the community of the new age is vitally related to another which meets us everywhere in early Christian thought. Indeed, as we shall find reason to conclude, the two conceptions are wholly dependent on each other and cannot be separated. The church, as contrasted with mere earthly societies, regarded itself

as a spiritual organism, quickened and controlled by the power of the Holy Spirit. Throughout the book of Acts we are made to realise that this was the grand characteristic of the church; and the evidence of Acts is more than confirmed by Paul. In many respects, it is true, Paul advances on the earlier doctrine—enlarging and deepening it, and applying it in new directions. But he takes for granted that in his underlying thought his readers are at one with him. They, like himself, are convinced that the Spirit has been imparted to the church as the one rule of its life, the earnest of its hopes, the power that guides it in difficulties, and insures its welfare and peace. All the activities of the church are the varied manifestations of the Spirit, which has been communicated to all its members and to them alone.

Luke has described, in a story familiar to every one, the first outpouring of the Spirit. The disciples were met for prayer, according to their custom, when the room was shaken by a rushing wind, and tongues of flame descended on each one of them. They went forth to proclaim their message to the multitude assembled for the feast of Pentecost from all parts of the earth, and found themselves able to address each different race in its own language. It may well be that behind this narrative in Acts there is the record of some day uniquely memorable in the history of the

church. Several modern scholars have discovered another trace of the same incident in Paul's allusion to the appearance of the risen Christ to "more than five hundred brethren at once" (I Cor. 15 : 6). But this is a mere conjecture, and has very little to support it. The appearance to the five hundred seems to point to Galilee rather than Jerusalem, and was significant solely for its bearing on the resurrection. Moreover, Luke is not describing the descent of the Spirit on a great number. He thinks of a private meeting of the disciples, who alone participate in the wonderful experience, and in the strength of it make their appeal to the multitude. So far as the incident is historical it goes back, apparently, to some occasion when the little company was met at Jerusalem and became conscious for the first time of the strange phenomenon of the speaking with tongues. But there can be little doubt that the narrative, as we find it in Acts, is mainly legendary. For one thing, it is incredible that so marvellous an extension of the church (three thousand converts in one day) should have taken place at that early time. All our evidence tends to show that the community enlarged itself slowly and gradually, and was still inconsiderable in numbers long after the day of Pentecost. Again, the miracle as represented to us was unnecessary. The many nationalities whose names are recorded all belonged to the circle of Greek-speaking peo-

ples, and did not require to be addressed in their native dialects. With the Greek language alone Paul was able to prosecute his world-wide mission. The miracle at Pentecost, if we insist on accepting it as historical, can only have been an exhibition miracle, serving no useful end. Once more, and this is the decisive point, the gift of Glossolalia, or speaking with tongues, was a well-recognised phenomenon in the early church, and had nothing in common with the miraculous gift described in Acts. Paul discusses it fully in chapters 12–14 of I Corinthians, and while various features in his account are not altogether clear, it is quite evident that he had something else in his mind than a speaking in foreign languages. We cannot suppose that Luke was ignorant of the true nature of Glossolalia, which continued all through the first century to be one of the outstanding elements in Christian worship. He himself refers to it more than once in subsequent passages of Acts, and in such a manner as to indicate that he was familiar with its character. How, then, are we to account for this strange transformation of the facts in the narrative of Pentecost? Most probably it has to be explained from that love of symbolism which betrays itself again and again in both of Luke's writings. He is preparing to tell the story of how the gospel was spread abroad among all nations, and he commences with a symbolic incident, in which

the later course of events is reflected in miniature. Men of all races are assembled to witness the nativity of the church at Jerusalem, and they all hear the gospel addressed to them in their own tongues. The symbolism possibly extends yet further. Pentecost was the commemoration of the giving of the Law, and according to a rabbinical legend, of which we have a reminiscence in Philo,* when God proclaimed the Law on Mount Sinai his voice divided itself into seventy languages, representing all the races of mankind. To Luke the beginning of the church is the counterpart of Sinai. It marked the promulgation of the new law, which, like the old one, was uttered in many tongues, as a law for all nations. That the narrative in Acts assumed its present form under the influence of ideas like these is more than possible; and the conjecture is partly borne out by critical analysis. Luke appears to make use of a primitive fragment, to which he has added his own account of the speaking in strange tongues. It is significant that in Peter's speech, which immediately follows, no reference is made to the miracle, and that the comment of the multitude is simply: "They are full of new wine." Thus it may be inferred that the original story told only of the earliest outburst of the well-known Glossolalia. Luke has taken advantage of this incident supplied to him by his sources to

* De Decal. 9 : 11.

elaborate a symbolical legend, which serves as a frontispiece to the ensuing history.

Leaving for the present the question of those "spiritual gifts," which come before us first in the story of Pentecost, we have now to consider the theory that was associated with them in the primitive church. They were prized for their own sake, as the means whereby the church was strengthened and helped forward in its mission. Yet Paul acknowledges that even the speaking with tongues, the most characteristic of all the gifts, was itself of subordinate value. The chief importance of this and of all the accompanying gifts lay rather in the evidence afforded by them that a divine power was at work in the church. It was the community of the Spirit.

Behind the doctrine of the Spirit as it meets us in the New Testament there lies a long and complex history which has only been partially unravelled by the investigations of modern scholars. It is probable that the conception was originally foreign to the religion of Israel and that its roots must be sought in primitive animistic belief. The Spirit appears in the earlier literature of the Old Testament as something independent of Jahveh.* It is an irresponsible power, apparently demonic in its nature, which takes possession of

* Volz, "Der Geist Gottes," pp. 10 *ff.*

certain men from time to time, and causes them to act in a manner that cannot be explained. The man on whom the Spirit has fallen "becomes another man," whether for good or evil; his own will is overmastered by a supernatural impulse. But this primitive conception of a power that acted independently could not maintain itself alongside of Hebrew monotheism. Under the influence of the prophets the Spirit is transformed into the Spirit of Jahveh and is strictly subordinated to his will and purposes. At the same time the earlier ideas continue to be attached to it. Its action is manifested in strange occurrences—abnormal energies and impulses, endowments that are beyond the measure of human wisdom. It is a supernatural power, breaking in upon the settled order of things, and is thus the peculiar attribute of the divine life. God himself possesses the Spirit in unlimited measure, while in men it appears as something alien and intermittent. Man is flesh and not Spirit, and the weakness of his nature can only be overcome at intervals by the descent upon him of the higher influence.

The action of the Spirit was discerned in all supernatural phenomena but more especially in the enlightenment of the prophet. This may partly be accounted for by the ecstatic character of prophecy in the earlier times. The prophet uttered his message in a condition of frenzy, which

seemed to be due to the entrance of the Spirit into the human agent. But in later prophecy these physical accompaniments were entirely absent. The one mark of the prophet was his possession of a higher insight and illumination; and it was in this that the great ethical prophets discerned the operation of the Spirit. The idea that the Spirit is manifested above all in prophecy connects itself with a larger idea which pervades the Old Testament and which requires a somewhat closer consideration.

We read in the book of Numbers* how seventy elders were endowed with the Spirit in order that they might act as assessors to Moses in the work of judging Israel. Two men who were not of the authorised number began, like them, to prophesy, and when complaint was made to Moses he exclaimed: "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them." The passage belongs to one of the later strata of the Pentateuch and reflects a train of thought which meets us again and again in the prophetical books. Isaiah† anticipates a time when the Spirit will be poured out on all the seed of Israel. Jeremiah‡ declares, in a memorable passage, that a day is coming when men will require no longer to teach their brethren, for all alike will know the Lord, from

* Num. 11 : 16 *ff.*
† Isaiah 44 : 3; 32 : 15.
‡ Jer. 31 : 33, 34.

the least to the greatest. It is not difficult to perceive the thought that underlies these and similar passages. Israel is the chosen nation and in its ideal character is endowed with the true knowledge of God. The nation as such has fallen short of its vocation, and the higher enlightenment is only given intermittently to the prophets, who exemplify what is central and essential in the life of Israel. But these individual men to whom God reveals himself are the guarantees of a holy nation in the future. A time is coming when the ideal conditions will be realised and all God's people will be prophets and will receive of his Spirit. This, then, is the characteristic Old Testament doctrine. The Spirit is the divine power bestowed on those whom God has set apart to be his servants. But since Israel as a nation is God's servant, his Spirit ought to reside in all Israelites, not merely in the few chosen natures. As yet this cannot be; but in the future age, when Israel is a holy people in fact as well as in name, the Spirit will be a universal possession. "It shall come to pass afterwards," says the prophet Joel in words which are quoted in Peter's speech at Pentecost. "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and even upon the servants and the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit." *

* Joel 2 : 28, 29.

The gift of the Spirit is thus conceived as the peculiar blessing of the new age; and it is only a variant of this idea when Isaiah connects it more specifically with the Messiah: "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord."* In the figure of the Messiah the future community is summed up and personified. He receives the gift that through him it may become the abiding possession of the people whom he governs. Their whole life, under the direction of the Messiah, will be controlled and illuminated by the Spirit of God.

In the Old Testament, therefore, we have to do with two conceptions: a more general and a more definite one. On the one hand, the Spirit is the divine as contrasted with mere natural power, and its action is perceived in all that is inexplicable by ordinary law. On the other hand, it is the divine power which is shaping the destinies of Israel, and which will fully manifest itself in the future elect community. In that coming reign of God what is now exceptional will be the normal order. Israel will enter on its new career as a holy people and will serve God perfectly in the power of his Spirit.

It has often been remarked as strange that the conception of the Spirit, which is so prominent

* Isaiah 11 : 2.

in the Old Testament and which was again to occupy so large a place in early Christian thought, should scarcely appear at all in our Lord's own teaching. From this it has been inferred that the church came by its doctrine indirectly—borrowing perhaps from the current Jewish theology or perhaps from the kindred ideas of certain heathen cults. The silence of Jesus on the work of the Spirit seems to have perplexed the Gospel writers themselves. They find the explanation of it in the theory that in our Lord's own lifetime the Spirit was concentrated in himself, being united with him either from his birth or from the moment of his baptism. After his death, according to this theory, it was detached from his own personality, and was bequeathed by him to the church at large.

Now, if the idea of the Spirit was indeed foreign to the teaching of Jesus, the emphasis which was afterward laid upon it would present an almost insoluble problem. We should have to conclude that from the very outset an alien element of far-reaching importance was added to the thought of Jesus. But when we look more closely we become aware that the conception is everywhere present in his own teaching, although it is implied rather than directly expressed.

We may turn, in this connection, to one of the few passages in which he makes explicit mention of the Spirit and which is fully attested by all

the Synoptic writers. The passage in question is that in which he rebukes his enemies, who had attributed his wonder-working powers to the agency of Satan. After showing the perversity of this charge he argues, "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come unto you"; and the words are immediately followed by his denunciation of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Many exegetical details in the passage are obscure, but its general meaning admits of little doubt. In his ability to work miracles, Jesus perceives the clear sign that the kingdom is at hand. His enemies in their wilful blindness had accused him of traffic with Satan—failing to discern that operation of the Spirit which was to manifest itself in the new age. For this utter want of sympathy with the divine action, this incapacity to recognise it when it was most evident, there could be no forgiveness.

Jesus, therefore, presupposes the Old Testament conception. To him, also, the Spirit is a power which reveals itself in supernatural action, and he looks forward to the new age for its larger manifestation. His miracles are evidence to him that the kingdom is at hand, for they are effected by that power which belongs to the kingdom and which is now breaking in upon the present order. This, it is necessary to observe, was the real significance which Jesus attached to his miracles. He did not regard them as works peculiar to him-

self and as marking out his personal dignity and authority; for he insisted that the disciples, also, if they had faith in God, might exercise a similar power. He pointed to them, rather, as the signs of the kingdom. Miracles were now possible because the new age was near and the Spirit was already becoming operative. A supernatural order was presently to set in, and these were its premonitory signs.

When we take account of this side of Jesus' thinking his comparative silence on the work of the Spirit is not difficult to explain. The conception of the Spirit was covered for him by that of the kingdom. As he thought of the new age about to dawn he took for granted the supernatural power which would rule in it and which would reveal itself in the new community. From the time of the prophets onward the coming of the kingdom and the descent of the Spirit on God's people had been correlative ideas; and Jesus did not think it necessary to enforce, in explicit terms, what was self-evident. Whenever he speaks of the kingdom he presupposes the new and higher principle which will take possession of men, enabling them to enter into God's purposes and to rise above the limitations of their old nature. Without the gift of such a power the new life which he anticipated was not to be realised. In this sense the disciples understood him. When, after his death, they constituted

themselves as the Ecclesia to which the kingdom had been promised, they looked for some evident sign that the Spirit had, indeed, been given them. Only thus could they have full assurance that they had received their part in the new age.

The conception of the Spirit, then, as we find it in the primitive church, was taken over directly from Jesus himself. Like the prophets, he thought of a future in which all God's people would be brought into a closer relation to God and would be endowed with higher powers and deeper insight into the divine will. He chose his disciples as the heirs of the future, and as such they claimed to participate in the Spirit. As the men around them belonged to the present world and were bound down to the conditions of the natural life, so they had been given their place in the new, divine order. Paul, in his development of the idea of the Spirit, maintained that through faith in Christ a man's nature was radically transformed. Hitherto he had been carnal, a mere creature of earth, devoid of all capacity for the higher life; but now he became a "spiritual man," renewed in his whole being and destined to immortality through the entrance into him of a divine principle. How far this doctrine was elaborated by Paul himself we cannot say; but, at all events, it was implicit in the belief which was held from the very beginning. The church regarded itself

as in a literal sense a supernatural community. In virtue of their possession of the Spirit, the believers in Christ had undergone a change and were subject to conditions that were not of this world.

At this point, however, we are met with a difficulty which might seem almost to suggest an alien influence working on the mind of the church. Jesus, as we have seen, connected the Spirit, in a peculiar manner, with his miracles. In those marvellous works he saw an irruption into the present of that higher order which would be realised in the future, and he declared that his disciples also might share in the miraculous gift. But when we turn to the life of the primitive church we no longer find the Spirit associated with miracles. The evidence of its presence is discovered rather in the strange phenomena that signalised Christian worship, and more especially in the Glossolalia or speaking with tongues. But while miracles have now a less conspicuous place, it must be remarked that the idea of miracle is still the underlying one wherever the work of the Spirit is in question. It is assumed that the one characteristic of all spiritual action is *power;* that is, an energy which cannot be explained from merely natural law. When Paul undertakes to test the genuineness of those who pretend to a larger measure of the Spirit he says that he will look solely to their "power"; "for the kingdom of God is not with word but with power." His

meaning is that the Spirit which is given to the children of the new age is, above all, dynamic in its nature. Those who possess it grow capable of varied activities that seem quite beyond the range of ordinary human effort. The "spiritual gifts," when we examine them, all run back to this fundamental idea. In their different ways they are the manifestations of a higher mode of action, and can only be accounted for on the hypothesis that a divine power has now found entrance into the habitual order of the world. The thought is expressed more than once in the New Testament that the miracles of Jesus had been only the beginning of a miraculous history. "The works that I do shall they do also, and greater works shall they do because I go to the Father" (John 14 : 12). And this, we can hardly doubt, was the accepted belief of the early church. Our Lord's miracles were handed down in the Gospel tradition not because they were his but because they were typical and prophetic of the new era which they had inaugurated. The charismatic gifts, the stronger capacity for labour and suffering, the moral achievements of the Christian life, all had their source in that Spirit of power which had first revealed itself in the works of Jesus.

It is true, nevertheless, that the Spirit was chiefly identified not with miracles, in the strict sense, but with those ecstatic phenomena of

which Glossolalia was the most remarkable. The real nature of this spiritual gift can be gathered with sufficient certainty from Paul's account of it in I Corinthians, which enables us to correlate it with the similar phenomena which have appeared from time to time in religious history and have not been unknown even in our own days. Indeed, the records of the Irvingite movement, the Camisard rising at the end of the seventeenth century, the Welsh revival of a few years ago afford us the best commentary on this chapter in the life of the primitive church.* The "speaking with tongues" seems to have consisted in the outpouring of broken words and inarticulate sounds under the influence of uncontrollable feeling. Stirred to his inmost soul by new aspirations, longings, intuitions which craved to be expressed and for which he could find no language, the worshipper was thrown back on those unintelligible cries. He was like a child who has not yet acquired words for the struggling thoughts and emotions which overmaster him. We can well understand how in that initial period of surging religious life, when the mighty truths of Christianity were breaking on men's minds for the first time, a manifestation of this kind was inevitable. Christian devotion had not yet

* A psychological analysis, in the light of kindred phenomena, has been attempted in two very able recent works: Mosiman, "Das Zungenreden"; Lombard, "La Glossolalie."

formed for itself a language, and the new enthusiasm had to find relief in those improvised modes of utterance. Such, then, was the "speaking with tongues," and this name applied to it is highly significant. Several explanations of it have been suggested, but it is almost certain that we have the real clew to its meaning in Paul's own words: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels." Paul is here contrasting ordinary human eloquence with the mysterious speech which came of its own accord in Christian worship. This Glossolalia he identifies—and the theory was evidently current in the church—with the language of the angels. Under the influence of the Spirit men offered praise to God in a supernatural tongue, similar to that with which he was worshipped in heaven.

Why, then, was the Spirit supposed to manifest itself most of all in this peculiar phenomenon? The answer to this question is probably to be sought in the actual sequence of events. Believing themselves to be the community of the kingdom, the disciples were seeking for some sign which would make it evident that the powers of the age to come had been imparted to them, and on one memorable occasion while they were met for prayer the Glossolalia suddenly broke out. It was something wholly new and inexplicable, and they welcomed it as the sign they had been waiting for. Henceforth they regarded this as the

typical manifestation of the Spirit, all the more so as the experience was found to repeat itself in all the Christian societies. The belief that the Spirit was operative in the new gift seemed to be confirmed by prophecies of scripture, especially by that striking passage of Joel which is cited in Peter's speech at Pentecost. But the appeal to scripture, here as elsewhere, was doubtless an afterthought. The Glossolalia impressed the mind of the church not because it seemed to correspond with the signs foretold by Joel but because it was itself so novel and extraordinary. It could only be explained on the ground that a divine power had now been communicated, a power which could be no other than the Spirit.

The speaking with tongues was the most striking of the charismatic gifts, and was apparently the first to manifest itself in a signal fashion. But when it was once recognised as the work of the Spirit it was found to be merely the index of a new power which was now active in the community, and which was capable of expression in many different forms. Paul enumerates a variety of "gifts"—faith, miracles, healings, prophecy, helps, and administrations—all of which are the acknowledged fruits of the Spirit. Though it is one it is manifold in its activity and is the moulding principle of the Christian life in all its aspects. Not only the charismatic gifts but the abiding virtues of faith, hope, love are the outflow of

that Spirit which is now the possession of the church. This development of the conception may be attributed in large measure to Paul himself, who discovered the far-reaching possibilities of the early theory. The Spirit which was at first associated only with strange, unaccountable phenomena became in his view a moral and religious power consistently active in the Christian life. But the idea worked out by Paul was implicitly present from the beginning. The church, as the community of the new age, claimed to be governed by the Spirit—the principle of the new supernatural order. This principle was supposed to manifest itself in certain specified modes of action peculiarly impressive in their nature; but in the last resort it underlay and animated the whole life of the church.

We here arrive at a question of primary importance, which requires to be answered before we can rightly understand the New Testament doctrine either in its earlier or its later phases. Much is told us of the working of the Spirit in individual believers. It was recognised that the divine power laid hold on the varied aptitudes of men, purifying and enhancing them and applying them to their proper service in the common cause. We hear of men who were "full of the Spirit" as distinguished from ordinary members on whom the grace had been bestowed in inferior measure. Nevertheless, it seems clear

that the Spirit was considered, in the first instance, to be the common possession of the church as a whole. This, indeed, was the characteristic of the church—that it was the *spiritual community.* Formerly, the gift of the Spirit had been reserved for favoured individuals and granted to them only at rare intervals; the new Israel, in its whole extent, was endued with the Spirit. Thus the belief was maintained from the outset that the individual received the heavenly gift only through incorporation with the church. By the rite of baptism he was assimilated to the body within which the Spirit was operative, and was so rendered capable of sharing in its influence. The various endowments of which we hear in the New Testament have all some relation to the common life of the church. Although exercised by individuals, they are supposed to belong to the church as a whole and to work together for its welfare and enrichment. Paul's discussion of the spiritual gifts in I Corinthians may be said to revolve upon this idea. He holds that the gifts are a common possession. Diverse as they are, they are all wrought by one and the selfsame Spirit, which dwells in the whole Ecclesia, though it distributes its influence among the several members. And since the individual possessors of the gifts are so many instruments of a common Spirit, they ought to feel that rivalry and self-assertion are out of place. They are like parts of

the body, which interact spontaneously with each other and direct their varied activities to the same end, in virtue of the one principle of life, controlling the body as a whole.

The difficulty of understanding the primitive age arises very largely from our failure to appreciate this idea of a community governed by the Spirit. We read back into the early history our own conception of the church as a normal society and forget that the spiritual idea was radical and constitutive. The church had examples before it of organised societies—the Roman Empire, the Jewish theocracy, the various sects and brotherhoods within Judaism—and by all of these, in course of time, it was profoundly influenced. But its original endeavour was to break away entirely from such models and to stand forth as the new community, ordered solely by the Spirit. There was no set ministry, for the gifts of the Spirit were bestowed on all; no stated mode of worship, for the Spirit moved as it listed and its impulses must not be quenched; no formal scheme of doctrine, which might exclude the new revelations imparted from time to time by the Spirit. The scattered groups of Christians were not confederated by any outward ties; together they made up the church, in which dwelt the one Spirit, and no other bond of union was deemed necessary. Even the concerns of ordinary life were lifted out of the domain of mere prudential ar-

rangement. At each stage of his missionary journeys Paul left himself to the direction of the Spirit; and some of his most momentous decisions were taken with no clearly defined purpose, on the impulse of a vision or a prophetic warning. Thus in the whole constitution and activity of the church, effect was given to the idea of the Spirit. As other societies were conformed to the rules and traditions of this age, the community of the future sought to yield itself without reserve to the control of the higher power. To adhere steadfastly to this ideal proved in the course of time impossible. As the church grew in numbers and enlarged its field of action, it was compelled to submit to some form of organisation, and more and more, as the enthusiasm of the first age dwindled, system had to take the place of spontaneity. Right on from the latter part of the first century we can trace the phases of this change, until at last the free community of the Spirit became the official church, with its dogmas and hierarchies.

It is mainly from Paul that we derive our knowledge of the earlier conditions, when the spiritual idea was still operative; and even the statements of Paul are not fully applicable to the period before him. Allowance must be made, on the one hand, for his own broadening and deepening of the primitive belief; and, on the other, for the fact that he describes the action of the Spirit in

churches of heathen origin. It is certain that in the process of the gentile mission Christianity was profoundly affected by the contemporary pagan religions, and this influence was especially felt in connection with the doctrine of the Spirit. Ecstatic phenomena formed a regular part of many heathen cults, and the ideas involved in them were readily transferred to Christian worship. Paul himself draws a parallel between the Spirit which his converts had received as Christians and that which had formerly impelled them to the service of dumb idols.* From this it has sometimes been inferred that the spiritual manifestations were chiefly or wholly associated with the gentile type of Christianity. In Judaism, it is urged, there was nothing that corresponded with these phenomena, and they could only have crept in from the heathen religions in which they had long been familiar. Such reasoning, however, fails to take account of the new motives and forces which were born with Christianity and which made it from the first essentially different from the parent religion. Moreover, we have to reckon with clear evidence that already in the earliest days at Jerusalem the phenomena declared themselves. Apart from the express testimony of Acts, we can gather from Paul's references that the spiritual gifts had always had their place in Christian experience. He assumes as fundamental

* I Cor. 12 : 2.

articles of belief that the Spirit is bestowed on all Christians, that without it no man can have part in Christ, that it is the quickening power which has its issue in all the new activities. These convictions could never have become so generally and firmly established unless they had been held from the very commencement.

At the same time, it is highly probable that the spiritual idea fell into abeyance at Jerusalem much earlier than in the gentile lands. From the glimpses afforded us in Acts we receive the impression that the Jerusalem church, even in the days of Paul, was becoming rigid and formal in its character; and since the purpose of Luke is to magnify the mother church, his unconscious witness to its decline is the more significant. The change may be attributed to various causes working in combination. (1) In Jerusalem Christianity had always before it the spectacle of the great Jewish organisation, and was led to assimilate itself to this model. Not only so, but constant intercourse with the temple and the scribal schools tended to modify its beliefs in the direction of Judaism. Those elements in its worship and doctrine which were most distinctively Christian were apt to be weakened or altogether suppressed. (2) Again, the presence of the original disciples, while it conferred a glory on the central church, must have brought about a certain arrest in its development. Those chief Apostles,

who had been companions of the Lord himself, had a natural right to leadership, and their authority overbore that of the Spirit. Of this we have the most signal example in the history of Paul, whose new movement, sanctioned, as he could not doubt, by the will of the Spirit, was yet obliged to justify itself before the tribunal of the Apostles. We are not directly told why Paul at last abandoned Syria and sought new fields of labour in distant lands, but it may be surmised that one of his compelling motives was to escape altogether from the Jerusalem sphere of influence. Only thus could he secure full liberty for the exercise of his spiritual gift. There was genuine meaning in Paul's contention that he, even more than Peter and the other Apostles, was the champion of the original Christian tradition. The church had come into being as a spiritual community, but at Jerusalem it had half forgotten its true character and had put outward authority in the place of the Spirit. (3) Once more, the very fact that the church at Jerusalem occupied the foremost position served to limit its free activity. The young gentile communities could allow room for the impulses of the Spirit—yielding to them in many cases rashly and mistakenly, but at least preserving the Christian tradition of freedom. The mother church was weighed down by the responsibility that rested on it. It was conscious that all the churches looked to it for guid-

ance and example, and that it must sustain the dignity of Christianity before the world. Under these conditions the old spontaneity was no longer possible, and the gifts of the Spirit were withdrawn.

But the later church at Jerusalem is not to be confounded with that which arose in the first days. Those earliest believers were lifted above the world of the present and felt that they bore their part in a supernatural order. They constituted the new community, in which the Spirit moved like a mighty rushing wind. It was in this period that the Christian beliefs and institutions had their origin; and they never entirely lost the distinctive form which was then impressed on them. We cannot understand their development in the later history until we trace them back to that first age, when they issued from a living experience of the Spirit of God.

LECTURE IV

JESUS AS LORD

It has been maintained, in the previous lectures, that the church was the outcome of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom. He had foretold the imminent approach of the new age and chosen his disciples to be the nucleus of the holy community that should possess it. They were assured by their visions of the risen Christ that his promises were on the way to fulfilment; and in the strange phenomena which began to manifest themselves in the daily meetings they perceived the action of the Spirit. The power characteristic of that new age on which they were about to enter was already working in the chosen people of God.

In this account of the beginning of the church there has been little reference to what we are accustomed to consider the one decisive factor. Did not the whole movement originate in a personal devotion to Jesus? By the marvellous experiences which convinced them that he had risen, the disciples had attained to an absolute faith in his Messiahship. He had been unjustly condemned, and on them, as his followers, there

devolved the great task of vindicating him and presenting him in his true character to an unbelieving world. Even his work and message were half forgotten in the absorbing interest that now centred on his person, and the whole faith of the church found utterance in the brief formula of confession: "Jesus is Lord."

It is from this point of view that the history of the first age is usually presented, and in one sense we have no choice but to accept it. Faith in Jesus was the ultimate spring of the new movement. All the hopes which now filled the hearts of his disciples were awakened by the belief that he was the Messiah and by the knowledge of him which had made that belief possible. Yet it does not appear that the immediate interest of the primitive church was in the person of Jesus. The attempt to discover the source of our religion in the loyalty of the disciples and their anxiety to vindicate the claims of their beloved Master has in two ways proved seriously misleading: (1) It has concealed the relation between the teaching of Jesus and that of the early church. He himself, it is affirmed, was wholly concerned with the gospel of the kingdom, while the disciples turned from his message to himself. In this manner his cause took a fresh direction after his death. The truths insisted on by Jesus fell largely out of sight; while he, in his own person, became the one object of faith. Out of this

estimate of what he had been and done his followers evolved a profound theology, which was not, however, the theology of Jesus. (2) It has unduly limited our conception of the aims and character of the church. We assume that at the outset it was wholly occupied with the defence of Jesus' Messiahship. In their general religious outlook the disciples, as we conceive them, were hardly to be distinguished from the body of their countrymen, and in one point only did they hold an independent position. The Messiah, for them, had already appeared in Jesus of Nazareth. From this rudimentary belief historians have tried to deduce the whole wealth of later Christianity, but the effort is a hopeless one. There must have been some broader basis to allow for the rearing of such a superstructure.

So far, indeed, from providing the starting-point, the mood of personal devotion to Jesus seems to have arisen as a later stage in Christian development. Strangely enough, it manifests itself first in Paul, who did not belong to the circle of immediate disciples; and it may be that his attitude was due, in some measure, to this very fact. Paul had not listened directly to the teaching of Jesus and could not share in the hopes and enthusiasms which he had communicated to his personal followers. From the first his mind had been concentrated on Jesus himself—on his risen life, on his sacrifice and the divine love of which

it was the pledge and evidence. To the disciples, on the other hand, the person of Jesus was associated with his message. Their belief in the coming of the kingdom had preceded their knowledge of his Messiahship, and it continued to occupy the foremost place. The faith in Jesus, so far from absorbing or supplanting, served only to reinforce it. That this was the attitude of the disciples we can gather from the speeches of Peter, in which Luke has reproduced for us the substance of the earliest Christian preaching. It is true that the Messiahship of Jesus is the central theme of these discourses; but they give it prominence in order to bring out the larger issues involved in it. Jesus has entered on his Messianic office; therefore the kingdom must be at hand, and God's people must avail themselves of the offered redemption. The emphasis is laid not so much on the person of Christ as on the work he is about to accomplish, and the note of pure loyalty and devotion is almost entirely absent.

We might certainly have expected that in those first days, when the impression of the Master's life was still fresh on the minds of his disciples, the personal element in their faith would have expressed itself more strongly. But the apparent aloofness is not difficult to understand if we try to realise their circumstances and outlook. They believed that the coming of the kingdom was only

a matter of days or weeks, and their thoughts were directed wholly to the great future that was so near at hand. Their faith in Jesus could not be separated from their hope of that future. His death, as they viewed it, was simply the first episode of a great drama still in process, and was presently to be followed by a glorious return. It was not till a later time that the attitude to Jesus became one of personal devotion. As the kingdom delayed its coming the hopes and desires which it had awakened were drawn more and more to the Lord himself. The meaning of his life and death, the divine worth of his personality were discerned more clearly as the perspective widened, while in Christian experience his inward and abiding presence was ever more intensely realised. Other influences, likewise, played their part—the mystical sentiments that gathered around the Lord's Supper, the ideas that crept in from gentile forms of worship, the adoption by Christian thinkers of the Logos speculation. These causes all combined to enhance the personal significance of Jesus as time went on, until in the Fourth Gospel he appears as the one object of faith. The Christian revelation is identified with Christ himself.

In the earliest days, then, the belief in the kingdom was primary. Jesus had impressed on his disciples that the great consummation was at

hand, and the thought now uppermost in their minds was that they were the elect community destined to inherit the new age. But this hope of the kingdom had become essentially different from what it had been in Jesus' lifetime. An absolute guarantee had been given for its fulfilment; for Jesus was now the Messiah. The death which, according to his teaching, was the condition of his Messiahship had been accomplished; and his resurrection was evidence, beyond the reach of doubt, that he had entered on his supreme office. Hence the coming of the kingdom was certain, and Jesus himself, in his Messianic character, would preside over its inauguration. On the one event of the Parousia, the return in glory of the Master whom they had known, the whole faith of the disciples was centred. To this extent it may be maintained that after Jesus' death his own person became the chief interest in Christian thought. The expectation of the kingdom was now bound up with the belief in his Messiahship and expressed itself in terms of it. But the wider belief was the primary and fundamental one. The disciples clung to their faith in Jesus and waited eagerly for his return, because through him they would possess the kingdom.

We have now to consider more closely what was implied in that Messianic belief on which the church was content to rest its entire hope for the future. One aspect of it, already touched upon,

requires at the outset to be clearly apprehended. The belief that Jesus was the Messiah had reference not to the life which he had lived on earth but to his present exalted life. In his resurrection he had not merely risen from the dead but had entered on a higher state of being, as the Messiah appointed by God. Paul has declared in a well-known passage that he concerned himself no longer with the earthly life of Jesus: "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more" (II Cor. 5 : 16). This saying of Paul is often quoted as marking the contrast between himself and the earlier disciples. With all his passionate devotion to Christ, he lacked the personal knowledge which had been vouchsafed to the others and was more than half conscious how much he had lost. But the attitude of mind which is expressed in the verse was not peculiar to Paul. We find it reflected in all the writings of the New Testament, and we cannot but regard it as the common attitude of the primitive church. The followers of Jesus, even those who had known him best, endeavoured to think of him not as he had been but as he was now. His life on earth had been only preliminary to that on which he had now entered and in which he revealed himself in his true dignity as the Messiah. It is significant that the incidents recorded in our Gospels are almost exclusively those which adumbrate, in some man-

ner, the Messianic vocation of Jesus; and the inference has been drawn from this that the Gospels were mainly intended as missionary handbooks supplying evidence for the cardinal topics of Christian preaching. But undoubtedly the evangelists wrote, in the first instance, for the church and collected those reminiscences of Jesus' life which they found current in the church tradition. If these are of one prevailing type we must discover the reason in this—that faith was directed to Jesus as the Messiah. The events even of his earthly life were remembered and cherished only as they seemed to throw light on that higher activity to which he had now attained.

At the same time we must not conclude, as some have done, that the figure of Jesus was merged wholly in that of the heavenly Messiah, with the result that the earthly life became indifferent to faith. On the contrary, as we are reminded by the very existence of our Gospel records, the memory of it was the chief treasure of the church and exercised a decisive influence. (1) In the first place, it transformed the Messiah into a living personality endowed with attributes that could awaken love and reverence and fidelity. It may be true that in the early Christology, especially that of Paul, the Jewish speculations on the Messiah are simply transferred to the exalted Jesus;* but the abstract Jewish Messiah could

* This is the view maintained by Wrede ("Paulus") and Brückner ("Die Entstehung der Paulinischen Christologie").

never have become the object of a religion. Behind all the wrappings which were borrowed from theological speculation there was the person of Jesus as he had been visibly manifested in his grace and truth. It was to him and not to the ideal figure with which he was now identified that his people directed their faith. (2) Again, the belief in the Messiahship had its ultimate guarantee in the historical life. While they were still with him, and knew him only as Master and Teacher, the disciples had learned to surmise the higher dignity of Jesus by their experience of what he had been to them. Their confidence in the resurrection was itself grounded in this experience: "He hath loosed the bonds of death," says Peter, "because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." * This impression which Jesus had made on those who had known his fellowship was the underlying security for all his claims. The acceptance of him as Messiah and viceregent of God was in the last resort a personal homage to the sovereignty of his moral nature. (3) Once more, as the life confirmed the belief in the Messiahship, so it was illuminated by it and invested with a new significance. Jesus had now exchanged his earlier state of being for a higher one; yet his new life was in some way continuous with that which he had lived on earth, and his will as it now was had been revealed in his former words and actions. The morality of the church

* Acts 2 : 24.

thus based itself on the character and example of Jesus. His sayings were collected and grouped together as the authoritative standard of all Christian teaching.

In the belief, then, that Jesus was Messiah, it was implied that this dignity had been bestowed on him since his death and had been attested by his resurrection. His earthly life, while it still profoundly influenced all Christian thought, was regarded as only the prelude to that true life on which he had now entered. But the belief in Jesus' Messiahship was itself no more than an aspect of the whole belief of the church. Perhaps the ordinary presentation of the early history has nowhere erred more grievously than in taking for granted that faith in the Messiahship was a bare dogma which had no necessary connection with anything else. Even if we admit that the primitive belief consisted wholly in the confession "Jesus is the Messiah," we have to remember what was involved in that confession. To the Jewish mind the title "Messiah" did not signify a personal dignity but an office and an official work. The Messiah was the representative of God in the establishment of the kingdom; and so entirely did the emphasis fall upon his work that in many of the apocalyptic visions of the future he does not appear at all as a personal figure. The hope of Israel was for the coming of the kingdom, and the Messiah, even when he is made

most conspicuous, is nothing but the instrument through which this hope is to be fulfilled. This is well illustrated by the fragment preserved to us in the Gospels from the preaching of John the Baptist. John's mind, it is evident, was absorbed by the one thought that the kingdom was near at hand, but in order to press home this thought he embodies it in a picture of the Messiah, who is already on his way to execute the divine judgment. To the primitive disciples the idea was no longer vague and abstract, as in earlier Jewish thought, but it was still associated with the traditional hopes. The Messiah stood for the kingdom, and the affirmation that he had appeared in Jesus gathered up in one brief statement a whole cluster of beliefs. It meant, in the first place, that the kingdom would presently become a reality; for the divine agent who would establish it had now been appointed. It meant, further, that the heirs of the kingdom would be those who stood in a given relation to Jesus. As Messiah he would designate the members of the new community, and none could enter into it except through him. Once more the belief that he was Messiah impressed a new meaning on all the conceptions which had hitherto attached themselves to the hope of Israel. His teaching was now authoritative, and in the light of it the whole religious attitude of men had to be radically changed. Thus the confession of Jesus as Messiah, so far

from standing by itself as an unrelated doctrine, derived all its meaning from the ideas connoted by it. From the beginning it was the symbol of a new faith and of a new outlook on the world.

The disciples believed, then, that Jesus had been exalted to the office of Messiah and that he would shortly return to fulfil his appointed work. But at a very early time the designation "Messiah" gave place to another, in which the faith of the church expressed itself even more clearly and definitely. Already in the days of Paul the confession which marked out the Christian believer, and which in all probability was solemnly uttered in the rite of baptism, was embodied in the words "Jesus is Lord." What is the meaning of this title, and how did it come to be applied to Jesus in preference to the title of Messiah? We have here a question the importance of which has only been recognised in recent years and which takes us at once to the very heart of primitive Christian belief.

Within the last few years attention has been directed to the striking parallels afforded by the contemporary cults. Adonis, Serapis, Mithra were each known to their worshippers under the title of κύριος, "the Lord"; and we have begun to learn from the Egyptian papyri how closely analogous to Christian usage were the various ap-

plications of the name. "There are gods many and lords many," says Paul, suggesting by his words a distinction which would be familiar to his readers. The "gods" were the acknowledged members of the Pantheon, while the "lords" were the new divinities introduced for the most part from the East and worshipped by special groups of devotees. One peculiar use of the term κύριος was in connection with the Cæsar worship which from the time of Nero onward played such an important part in the religious observances of the age. The deified emperor could not be regarded as a god in the strict sense, and took rank with the divinities who stood outside of the old national religions. In subapostolic times the recognition of Jesus as Lord acquired a fresh significance from the Christian aversion to Cæsar worship; and it may be that this contrast is occasionally hinted at in the New Testament. For example, when Paul declares that Jesus has the "name which is above every name" he may be thinking of the usurpation by an earthly king of the supreme title of Lord, which is due to Christ alone. But the sharp conflict with Cæsar worship belongs to a later phase of the history, and may be left out of account in the investigation of purely New Testament ideas.

The application to Jesus of a name already assigned in current usage to the Oriental divinities is certainly very striking; all the more so as the

cults in question all centred in the idea of redemption. The worshipper of Attis or Osiris, in speaking of his "lord," had in mind the conception of a redeemer, no less than the Christian when he ascribed the same name to Jesus. We cannot wonder that not a few modern scholars have been tempted to explain the name as one of the terms that were adopted by the new religion from the prevailing cults to which it bore a superficial resemblance. If this could be proved, our estimate of early Christianity would require in some important respects to be modified.

But against this view there is one argument that seems to be practically decisive. It can be gathered from the evidence that the name was employed in reference to Jesus at a date so early that it cannot have been borrowed from any alien religion. (1) Luke apparently knows of no time when the church did not regard Jesus as κύριος. Already in Peter's speech at Pentecost we have the emphatic statement, "God hath made him both Lord and Christ"—which implies that from the beginning the idea of Messiahship was conjoined with that of Lordship. (2) Paul regularly speaks of "the Lord" or "the Lord Jesus," and assumes that this was the name most widely current in all the churches. Especially noteworthy are those passages in the Epistles where the name is expressly associated with the common tradition, *e. g.*, "I have received from the Lord that which

also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus took bread." It can hardly be doubted that Paul is here reproducing the language of those earlier Apostles from whom he had taken over the broad outline of the Christian teaching. To them Jesus was "the Lord," and it was from them that the name was transmitted to the church at large. (3) Several expressions in the New Testament are marked by their Aramaic form as terms which had come down from the original worship of the church, when a mission outside of Palestine had not yet been thought of. Among these primitive expressions, cherished and left untranslated because they preserved a link with the earliest days is "Maranatha"—"the Lord cometh," or "come, O Lord." This prayer or promise was adopted as the Christian watchword, and of itself is sufficient evidence, though we had no other, of the early adoption of the title "Lord." It was embodied in a phrase which had acquired a ritual value at a time when the gentile mission was just beginning. (4) Scarcely less decisive is the other expression several times used by Paul with a solemn emphasis, "Jesus is Lord." It is evident that he intends these words to recall a formula well known to all Christians as the summary of their belief, and the formula, we may be almost certain, was that of the confession pronounced at baptism. On such an occasion and for such a purpose no language could be employed which had

not been consecrated by the earliest traditions of the church.

We can have little hesitation, therefore, in concluding that the name "Lord" as applied to Jesus was part of the original Christian teaching. Ideas derived from the heathen cults may have gathered around it in later days; indeed, it may itself account in no small measure for the entrance of those alien influences into Christianity. The missionaries proclaimed Jesus in the gentile lands under a name that was already bestowed on certain divinities; and in this way a confusion would arise in the minds of heathen converts. Elements that belonged to the service of the other "lords" would find their way imperceptibly into Christian worship. This much may be granted, but if we go further and maintain that the name was actually borrowed from paganism, we must assume that in its very inception the church was affected by foreign influences. Some radical critics have not shrunk even from this conclusion.* They fall back on a theory that the district of Galilee to which the original disciples belonged was Hellenistic as much as Jewish, and that we must therefore reckon from the outset with an infusion of pagan ideas. A theory of this kind is necessary if the name "Lord," which reaches so far back into the history, is to be traced

* A typical writer of this school is Maurenbrecher, "Von Jerusalem nach Rom."

to a pagan origin; but it hardly requires a serious refutation. The disciples, as all the evidence proves, were entirely Jewish in blood and training and sympathy, and before we are driven to an alien source for that title which they applied to Christ we have to consider whether it may not be explained along the lines of native Jewish thought.

In the Old Testament "the Lord" is uniformly the name for God, and it may appear at first sight as if this divine name were simply transferred to Jesus. This view has been strongly held by some writers, who adduce in proof of it a number of scriptural quotations in the New Testament which are so applied as to identify Jesus with "the Lord." * These passages are certainly surprising in their boldness; but we can draw no other inference from them than that advantage was taken, for the purposes of Christian teaching, of the ambiguous meaning of the word κύριος. It is inconceivable that in the first age, when the monotheistic idea was still maintained in all its strictness, Jesus was regarded as one with God.

In any case, the transference to Jesus of the Old Testament title does not necessarily imply that he was called by the divine name. It is well known that through motives of reverence, or perhaps of superstition, the Jews of the later

* *Cf.* I Cor. 1 : 31; 10 : 22; II Cor. 3 : 16; 8 : 21; 10 : 17; Phil. 2 : 10 *ff.*; Eph. 4 : 8; Heb. 1 : 10.

age refrained from uttering the direct name of God, and substituted for it another, which is rendered in the Septuagint by κύριος and in our own version by "the Lord." This is not a personal name, but a title indicating sovereignty, and has its counterpart in the term "servant," which is used of the worshipper. It expresses that conception of a divine being which was common to all Oriental religions and which was suggested by the prevailing character of Oriental monarchy. As each of the neighbouring peoples had its national divinity, who was worshipped as "Baal" or "Moloch," "master" or "king," so to Israel Jahveh was "the Lord." Here, it may be observed in passing, we can discover the true point of contact between the Oriental cults and Christianity in the employment of the name κύριος. Judaism was itself an Oriental religion, and from time immemorial had applied to God the same term of homage as was customary in those new faiths which were now invading the Roman Empire. From it and not from its younger rivals Christianity adopted the term.

In the Old Testament usage, then, "the Lord" is a general rather than a proper name. It did not denote God in his unique and transcendent personality, but was chosen for the express purpose of avoiding such a presumptuous reference. God in himself was unknowable, unnamable; and the worshipper was content to speak of him under

a title that served only to mark his own attitude of absolute submission. God was "the Lord"; he himself the servant. When we consider it from this point of view we can understand how the name was borrowed from the Old Testament and transferred to Jesus. There was no thought of identifying Jesus with the ineffable God; although it may be granted that from its association with the idea of God the name had acquired a peculiar shade of meaning and implied not submission merely but awe and worship. But in itself it was only an abstract title denoting kingship and authority, and this limitation of its meaning had always been clearly recognised. Jesus had now become King of his people—stood over against them in such a relation that they were conscious of his right to their utter obedience. He was "the Lord" and they his servants or "bond-slaves."

The name may possibly have connected itself at the beginning with a definite aspect of the Messianic belief. According to a Jewish doctrine which finds expression in several of the Apocalypses, the new age was to be ushered in by a reign of the Messiah. For a given period he would wield authority as the representative of God, until his work was completed and God himself would assume the sovereignty. These ideas are set forth by Paul in a familiar passage of I Corinthians: "He shall reign till he hath put all things

under his feet; then he shall deliver up the kingdom to God the Father, that God may be all in all." * The passage is solitary in Paul's writings, and the view it presents is out of harmony with his deeper religious instincts, which refuse to admit a mere transient and provisional value in the work of Christ. We can hardly be wrong in assuming that here, as in other instances, he has formally accepted certain traditional elements without any attempt to reconcile them with his own characteristic thought. He may have borrowed directly from Jewish speculation, but more probably he makes room for a conception which had already established itself in Christian doctrine. It reappears in the book of Revelation, where the intermediate reign of Christ is definitely limited to a period of a thousand years. The name κύριος, then, may possibly have borne some reference to this peculiar theory of a Messianic reign which would give place, in the end, to an absolute reign of God. By and by would come the great consummation, but as yet it was the opening period of the new age in which the Messiah was to be recognised as Lord.

The title of κύριος was broadly equivalent to that of Messiah; but it carried with it a more specific meaning, and here we may discern the true reason for its adoption by the primitive church. It was ascribed to Jesus not only in

* I Cor. 15 : 28.

his capacity of Messiah but in his relation to his people. "For us," says Paul, "there is one Lord, Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 8 : 6). In the old order now passing away there were many sovereigns who laid claim to men's obedience—earthly kings and potentates, gods many and lords many. But a new community had come into existence corresponding with the new age, and the only head whom it acknowledged was Jesus Christ. By confessing him as its Lord the church gave expression to the consciousness of its unique character and vocation. It declared itself to be the community of the future, chosen by Christ and owing its allegiance to him alone.

A twofold reference was thus involved in the designation of Jesus as Lord: (1) On the one hand, there was the conviction that he had now entered on the full prerogatives of his Messianic office. Formerly he had been Master and Teacher, now he had commenced his reign. It is true that Paul, in several of his allusions to Jesus' earthly life, speaks of him as "the Lord," and in so doing he seems to be following the uniform practice of the church.* Already, on the night on which he was betrayed, it was "the Lord Jesus" who instituted the supper. But we cannot infer from such passages that Jesus even in his earthly life

* *Cf.* the designation of James as "the Lord's brother"—itself a striking proof of the use of the κύριος title by the primitive community in Jerusalem.

was conceived as exercising the rights of Lordship. It is evident, rather, that the name by which he was now known had come to be inseparably attached to him, so that it was employed even in connection with his earthly ministry. The definite import of the name is that assigned to it by Peter at Pentecost: "God hath now made him both Lord and Christ." (2) On the other hand, by the use of the title the church declared its own peculiar relation to the Messianic king. It had broken with the present order and had thrown in its lot with the new and higher order. Jesus had recognised it as his holy community over which he reigned as Lord. The belief in his Messiahship might conceivably be held by one who was still outside of the circle of his people; but to call him by the name of "Lord" was itself the assertion of a claim upon him, a right of citizenship in his kingdom. For this reason the baptismal confession took the form of "Jesus is Lord." By making this declaration, the convert not merely expressed a belief that Jesus was the Messiah but brought himself into a bond of union with Jesus. Acknowledging him as Lord, he passed over by that act into the Christian church and became possessed of those mysterious privileges of which it held the keeping. So, as contrasted with Messiah, κύριος was the name that implied surrender to Jesus and participation in his reign. It was attributed to him by those

within the chosen community, and their use of it was the mark of their high calling. "No man," says Paul, "can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Spirit"; that is, to confess him by that name is proof that you are numbered among his people on whom the gift of the Spirit has been bestowed.

It is from this point of view that we must understand that conception of *faith* which was henceforth to determine the whole nature of Christianity. One of the earliest names by which the disciples called themselves was "the believers" (οἱ πιστεύοντες); and the primary meaning of the name admits of little doubt. The "belief" which it denoted was the acknowledgment of the Messianic right of Jesus. While the outside world averred that he had been justly put to death as a false Messiah, his own followers believed his claim. This was all that was directly signified by faith; yet we altogether misapprehend its import, even in the earliest days, when we explain it as nothing else than the intellectual assent to a given thesis. The Christian confession, as we have seen, was expressed in the form "Jesus is Lord," and by making this confession the convert not only declared his belief that Jesus was the Messiah but placed himself in a certain relation to Jesus. He submitted his life to be ruled by Jesus. He broke with the present order of things and identified himself with that new community in which Jesus reigned. From

the beginning we find the idea of faith vitally associated with that of "salvation." To accept Jesus as Lord implied that you had transferred your allegiance from this world, which was presently to undergo the judgment and had your portion in the kingdom of God. It has been customary to assume that Paul radically transformed the idea of faith which had been given him by the early church. The mere intellectual act of belief became for him an act of will, of entire self-surrender. Paul was, indeed, the first to analyse the conception of faith and to exhibit it in its true significance for the Christian life; but the conception itself was present and fully operative from the beginning. In the same act whereby they acknowledged the claim of Christ, the earliest converts subjected their wills to him, placed themselves under his protection, threw in their lot with his cause. All that was subsequently meant by faith was implicit in the confession "Jesus is Lord."

In one respect, indeed, Paul infused a new element into the primitive conception or at least gave clear expression to an element that had lain hidden. He connected faith in Christ with that personal devotion to him which lay at the heart of his own religion. The love and reverence which Jesus had awakened in his disciples had always remained with them and had given meaning and reality to their belief in his Messiahship. But

this estimate of his person was merged in that of his office. He was the Lord who would reign in the new age, and by confessing him they were marked out as the people of the kingdom. With Paul, however, the object of faith is Christ in his own person. "He is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (I Cor. 1 : 30). Faith has its issue in the mystical union with Christ, whereby the life that is in him communicates itself to the believer. This mood of personal devotion appears to have begun with Paul, and may partly be explained from his peculiar temperament and the influences by which his thinking was affected. But in the last resort we can recognise in it the inevitable development of Christian thought. Jesus had given his message under apocalyptic forms, and after his death it continued to be enclosed within this framework. The disciples were absorbed in the thought of the coming kingdom, and their faith was directed to Jesus as the Lord through whom they would possess the kingdom. But as time went on the apocalyptic forms tended to fall away. It was understood, ever more clearly, that the new life had been given to men in Christ himself and that fellowship with him was the true fulfilment of the kingdom of God.

LECTURE V

THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO JUDAISM

THE Christian community grew up at Jerusalem under the shadow of the temple and the rabbinical schools, and its first members were of Jewish birth and had been nurtured in the national customs and traditions. In view of these undoubted facts, it has been commonly assumed that Christianity at the outset was scarcely distinguishable from Judaism. So far from surmising that they were the pioneers of a new religion, the disciples were anxious to maintain their status as orthodox Jews; and it was the supreme service of the Apostle Paul that he asserted the originality and independence of the gospel. He did not succeed except at the cost of a violent struggle, and even to the end the great mass of Jewish converts refused to follow him. Now, we have already seen reason to believe that this reading of the primitive history is a superficial one. The Christian movement, disguised as it was under Jewish forms, was essentially new, and this was recognised even by its earliest adherents. But the whole question of the relation of the primitive

church to Judaism is so difficult and complex, and is so vitally bound up with larger issues, that it demands a separate investigation.

It may be admitted that in the commonly accepted view there is much that appears to correspond with the historical facts. The disciples had evidently no intention of breaking with Judaism, and never expected that their teaching would in the end subvert it. While associating as a brotherhood and holding to their faith in Jesus as the Messiah, they continued to show loyalty to the ancient ordinances. In the speeches ascribed to Peter in the opening chapters of Acts there is no suggestion of a menace to the beliefs and institutions of Judaism. On the contrary, Peter is careful to preserve an attitude of friendliness to his Jewish countrymen. He attributes their rejection of Jesus to ignorance (Acts 3 : 17), and refuses to admit that they have incurred any permanent stain of guilt, much less a final condemnation. By the acknowledgment of their great error they are to be stirred up to a more earnest repentance; for in spite of all that has passed they are the true heirs of the covenant, and the promises given by God through the prophets still remain valid for them and their children (Acts 3 : 24–36; 2 : 39). The feeling toward Judaism which thus pervaded the earliest Christian preaching, has not wholly disappeared even in the writings of Paul. He, too, declares that

God's covenant with his chosen people cannot fall to the ground and that their seeming rejection can be only temporary. The gentiles are reminded of their incalculable debt to Israel, and are taught to recognise that, notwithstanding its present unbelief, Israel has a prior claim which will yet become effectual.

It does not follow, however, that the disciples aimed at nothing more than to constitute a sect within the parent religion. With the fullest consciousness that they had come into possession of something new, they may yet have sought to retain their hold on the system they had inherited and to construe their new faith by the categories which it supplied. In the history of every great movement the new wine is poured, to begin with, into old bottles. Men take for granted that the existing order must continue and will not acknowledge that they have definitely broken with it. They avail themselves of its language and conceptions, and imagine that they are only remodelling it, when, in point of fact, they are building on fresh foundations. This was inevitably the position of the first disciples. Judaism was their whole world of thought, and the idea of escaping from it did not present itself to their minds. Assuming its validity and permanence as self-evident, they tried to find room in it for their new beliefs and to express them in terms of it. None the less they were sensible of the diver-

gence of those beliefs from the current Judaism. While they clung to the old presuppositions—for they could conceive of no others—they were secretly aware of their inadequacy and were reaching out beyond them. In one sense it is true that Christianity did not assert itself as a new religion until Paul severed the bonds that united it with the Law. But, when all is said, Paul did nothing more than recognise as a principle what had always been true in fact. The church, though allying itself with Judaism, was inwardly separate from it—a new organism with a mission and character of its own.

But the initial acceptance of Judaism is not to be explained wholly from this unwillingness or inability to break away from an established tradition. For the very reason that it was aware of its own special calling, the church held fast to the Jewish connection. The inconsistency of the new religion with the old was sufficiently apparent from the first, and in ordinary course a separation would have been effected before the days of Paul. But the earlier Apostles refused to make the separation. They were convinced that in order to realise its essential idea the church required to maintain its link with Judaism.

At the risk of repetition it is here necessary to insist once more on that conception of the Ecclesia on which the Christian brotherhood was founded. The belief had come down from the age

of the prophets that there had always been in Israel a "remnant" which had stood for the nation in its ideal character amidst all the moral failure and unworthiness. It was claimed that this genuine people of God was now represented by the Christian church. Not only was the church continuous with the true Israel of the past, but its title depended on the fact of its continuity. It was heir to the promises in so far as it could prove itself one with the faithful community to which they had been given. This conception of the Ecclesia from which it took its departure involved a twofold relation between primitive Christianity and Judaism.

On the one hand, the church was conscious that it stood apart from the nation. As in the past there had been a clear distinction between the chosen remnant and Israel as a whole, so now the Ecclesia had its own calling in which Israel did not participate. It rested its confidence on other grounds than those of racial descent and prerogative. This is plainly brought out even in those speeches of Peter which seem to prove conclusively that as yet there was no thought of separation. Peter declares, in so many words, that the nation has no share in those hopes which have been awakened by the resurrection of Jesus. The promise was, indeed, made to the Jews, "to you and to your children," but at present they are outside of the scope of its opera-

tion. It is reserved for the Christian brotherhood, and men must attach themselves to that brotherhood by faith in Christ before they can obtain their inheritance. On this distinction of the church from the larger community of the nation the whole argument of Peter may be said to turn.

But, on the other hand, the church laid emphasis on its solidarity with the nation. The true Israel, into whose traditions it had entered, had been a portion of the actual Israel. It inherited the promises not in its own right but as representing the nation in its higher calling. Israel had been the object of God's choice; and this was still true, although there was only a minority that had proved worthy of the privileges which were offered to all. This conviction, which is marked so clearly in the prophets, was held no less firmly in the early church. It was assumed that the Ecclesia, while it constituted a body apart, was yet involved in the natural Israel and derived its title through the nation. Paul was the first who grasped the idea of a purely spiritual community—a people descended from Abraham in so far as they shared the faith of Abraham. But it is worth noting that even Paul did not succeed in entirely freeing himself from the belief that the higher vocation was in some manner inherent in the race. To the question, "What advantage, then, hath the Jew?" he answers un-

hesitatingly: "Much every way." * He cannot forget that he himself has kinship with the people "to whom pertaineth the adoption and the glory and the giving of the Law and the service of God and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, concerning the flesh, Christ came." † If this sense of the prerogatives of the nation still clung to the mind of Paul, we cannot wonder that it coloured the thinking of the older Apostles who had not yet contemplated the possibility of a church that should include others than Jews within its membership. Distinguishing though they did between the true and the historical Israel, they yet assumed their interrelation as self-evident. The very idea of an Ecclesia implied that of a chosen nation.

We have to reckon, therefore, with a twofold attitude to Judaism, and both sides must be taken into account if we would rightly understand the controversy which was in process throughout the lifetime of Paul. The controversy inevitably centred on the relation of Christianity to the Law. The mere racial sentiment had already been so far relaxed that submission to the Law, with its accompanying seal of circumcision, was accepted as equivalent to actual Jewish descent. And with the rise of the gentile mission the question became acute as to whether the Law was obligatory

* Romans 3 : 1, 2. † Romans 9 : 3–5.

on those who had complied with the condition of faith in Christ. In the earlier days the question could not present itself in a clear-cut form, as it did later; but from the beginning the church must have held some theory as to the relation of faith and the Law. How far is it possible to get behind the Pauline conflict and to determine the place which was assigned to the Law in primitive Christian thought?

It is apparent—alike from the testimony of Acts and of Paul's Epistles—that the early disciples conformed to the Law in the same manner as their Jewish countrymen. Indeed, it was this fidelity to the Law that proved the safeguard of the infant church, enabling it to survive within the very citadel of Judaism until it became strong enough to hold its own. The immunity enjoyed by the disciples has often been regarded as one of the chief problems of the early history. They settled at Jerusalem immediately after the death of Jesus, when the very men who had so sedulously planned his destruction were still in power. Yet for a period of several years they remained unmolested and were allowed to carry on a vigorous propaganda. It is the manifest purpose of the writer of Acts to make out that Christianity had always suffered persecution at the hands of the Jews, but he has to admit that during the first critical years it was left at liberty. He tells, indeed, of an inquiry into the new teaching on the

part of the council, and by the use of a double narrative of what seems to be the same incident he gives us the impression of two separate attacks. But it is clear, by his own showing, that the inquiry resulted in nothing more serious than an admonition. Even when a real persecution broke out at last, in consequence of the aggressive preaching of Stephen, it was evidently partial in its operation. The Jewish authorities distinguished between two parties in the church, and, while the adherents of Stephen were dispersed and brought to trial, the Apostles themselves continued at Jerusalem in the enjoyment of their previous freedom. This toleration can hardly be explained on the ground that the new movement was an obscure one, which was purposely disregarded lest an official ban might bring it into prominence. A wisdom of this kind is rarely to be found among jealous ecclesiastics holding a monopoly of spiritual power. Moreover, it is evident from the sparing of the Apostles after the death of Stephen that no hostility was shown to the Christian movement for its own sake. Nor can we accept Luke's explanation, embodied in the speech ascribed to Gamaliel, that the Jewish leaders had agreed to suspend their judgment until it should appear from the success or failure of the mission whether it was of God. As a matter of fact, the eventual success, which ought on this hypothesis to have secured its recognition, was the signal for the outbreak of perse-

cution. It seems possible to account in only one way for the tolerant attitude so long observed by the authorities. They were the appointed guardians of the Law, and the disciples, while making no concealment of their new beliefs, remained faithful to the Law. Judaism, it must be borne in mind, was, in the first instance, a ceremonial code, conforming, in this respect, to the general type of ancient religion, in which mere belief played little part. We know that in Greece and Rome there was room for a wide diversity of philosophical opinion so long as the accepted religious ceremonies were observed in due form. Religion, to the ancient mind, was not so much a matter of belief as of praxis; liberty was allowed for an endless modification of doctrine, while the ritual was inflexibly maintained. Judaism, it is true, was based on doctrine to a much greater extent than the other religions of the time, and one belief—that of the unity of God—was held with an uncompromising tenacity. But apart from this and the dogmas which immediately flowed from it, opinion was left free. Pharisees and Sadducees were at variance on cardinal points of faith. The sect of the Essenes had grafted on the stem of orthodox Judaism many strange speculations, borrowed apparently from the East; yet the Essenes were not only recognised as pious Jews but were held in peculiar reverence because of their exact observance of the Law. A still more conspicuous instance is that of Philo, who resolved

the whole Old Testament teaching into a speculative system, derived from Plato and the Stoics, without ever ceasing to regard himself as a faithful Jew. Numberless Jews, especially among the Dispersion, seem to have exercised a similar freedom. Thus, we are not to think of the Judaism of the first century as a strictly uniform system. It contained within itself a hundred sects holding beliefs of the most varied character but all acknowledging the validity of the Law. Between the more eccentric sects and the general body of traditional Judaism there might be bitter controversy, but their right to a place within the borders of the national religion was not seriously called in question.

We may conclude, then, that Christianity in its initial period shared in the liberty that was granted, as a natural right, in matters of belief. The authorities may well have been suspicious of the new movement, but they could urge no valid reason for proceeding against it so long as the legal orthodoxy of its adherents was undoubted. It was only when a party in the church took up a critical attitude toward the venerable institutions of Jewish worship that official Judaism became alarmed, although even then it exempted from the persecution those who remained faithful to the ceremonial religion.

Admitting, however, that Christianity was regarded from the outside as a mere variant type of

Judaism, we have now to consider whether this view corresponded with that of the church itself. Are we to infer from its acquiescence in the Law that it sought to remain on the footing of a sect within the pale of the national religion? The answer to this question has often been confused by failure to allow for a difference between the earlier and later conditions of the church at Jerusalem. There are clear indications that after the death of Stephen, and still more after the general persecution under Herod Agrippa in the year 42, the mother community became increasingly Jewish in its sympathies. A strong party raised opposition to Paul on the express ground that he was subverting the authority of the Law; and it was able to claim, apparently with some show of reason, that the church at Jerusalem was in sympathy with it. But it seems more than probable that the earlier attitude was wholly different. Paul emphatically declares that the party which opposed him consisted of "false brethren," * and insists that between himself and the older Apostles, although there might be divergence of opinion, there was no real antagonism. In this connection his account of the dispute at Antioch is particularly illuminating. He affirms that Peter, although he finally took an opposite side, was of the same mind as himself and was overborne in spite of his real convictions. So thoroughly was he assured of Peter's true sentiments that he did

* Gal. 2 : 4.

not hesitate to accuse him openly of "hypocrisy." It is commonly assumed that these sentiments of Peter—if Paul is correct in his judgment of them—were peculiar to Peter himself. He was a man of open, catholic nature, and his personal intercourse with Jesus had deepened and purified his instincts. At a distance from the contracting Judean atmosphere he had ventured to give scope to his larger view of Christianity, although he shrank back when pressure from Jerusalem was brought to bear on him. But we miss the significance of the whole incident when we read in it nothing more than the individual attitude of Peter. Paul, it is evident, means us to think of Peter as representing the view which was characteristic of the primitive church, although it had been perverted by the influence of the "false brethren." It is this that gives point to Paul's rebuke of the older Apostle. He appeals not so much to his private conscience as to his knowledge of the true position of the church. Peter, it is suggested, must know in his heart that this practice which he is countenancing is the later innovation, while Paul has taken his stand on the genuine primitive tradition.

What, then, was this tradition to which Peter had been disloyal? It is clearly set forth in the words of remonstrance which Paul addressed to him, and which he repeats in his narrative of the incident. "We who are Jews by nature and not

sinners of the gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by works of the Law" (Gal. 2 : 15, 16). Faith in Christ, and faith alone, is necessary to salvation. This, according to Paul, is not merely his own interpretation of the gospel, but is shared with him by the primitive Apostles. The Judaists, who contend that works of the Law are required in addition to faith, have corrupted the original teaching of the church.

Now, it might appear at first sight as if Paul here showed a complete ignorance of the earlier situation or viewed it solely through the medium of his own beliefs. The disciples, as we have seen, had no intention of breaking away from the Law. The sharp opposition between works of the Law and faith in Christ did not exist for them, and only emerged in the course of that controversy of which Paul himself was the centre. That Paul should have imputed to Peter a view that was so peculiarly his own has often appeared incredible, and attempts have been made to explain the passage quoted above as a parenthetical reflection with no bearing on anything that was actually said at Antioch. It is, indeed, probable that Paul gives only an abstract of his speech and throws the argument into theological language which he may not have literally used.

But the passage can hardly be construed in any other way than as part of the remonstrance; indeed, as the essential part, which lends it force and meaning. Paul declares in so many words that to the primitive church as to himself faith was everything and the Law a mere side issue, and on this fact he is content to rest his cause. Nor is there any fair reason to doubt that this account of the primitive position was substantially correct and was so recognised by Peter. The church in its earliest form was composed wholly of Jews or Jewish proselytes by whom the Law was accepted as something normal and inevitable. It was possible for them to continue their adherence to it and yet to be fully conscious that its value was altogether secondary. Jesus himself had conformed to the Law, as to an established system, while he never confused this conventional rule of life with the higher spiritual requirements, and his disciples adopted it in a like manner. Without ever questioning that the Law was obligatory, they yet perceived that it belonged to the circumference and not to the essence of religion. They disregarded it in their teaching and laid the emphasis on faith alone as the condition of salvation. It may seem paradoxical to affirm that the purely Jewish church, confined to the city of Jerusalem, was freer in its attitude toward Judaism than the active missionary church of a later time. But in reality this was not only possible but nat-

ural. It was their contact with the gentiles, consequent on the mission, which accentuated in the minds of Jewish believers their sense of a special privilege. They were compelled to reflect on their relation to the Law and either to abandon it altogether or to assign it a definite place alongside of faith. In the earlier period, when they had to deal solely with their Jewish countrymen, the question of the Law could be set aside. They insisted not on that which they held in common with other Jews but on that which was their own possession. Faith in Christ stood out as the one thing needful, while the Law was frankly acknowledged to be indifferent. It was Paul's service to Christianity that he had the boldness and consistency to maintain this ground even when conditions were changed and the gospel was offered to the gentiles. But he was justified in his plea that the belief upheld by him was nothing else than the original belief of the church.

At the so-called council of Jerusalem the problem of the Law was formally discussed by the church leaders and was settled, apparently, on the basis of a compromise; that the Law should still be binding on Jewish converts while gentiles should be left free. From this decision of the council it is perilous to draw any far-reaching conclusions. Apart from the many obscurities and contradictions of the two accounts in Acts

and Galatians, we have to make allowance for the special circumstances by which the council was affected. A number of conflicting interests and types of opinion had to be consulted, and the settlement agreed upon may not have represented the normal attitude of the church. Moreover, the drift of the mother community toward Judaism had now been in process for some years; and from the decision adopted by the council we cannot form any certain estimate as to the original Christian position. Yet if any attempt was made to preserve a consistency with older traditions we may discern two facts that were acknowleged in the compromise. On the one hand, the Law had never been regarded as more than secondary. If it had held its place from the first as a necessary condition of salvation the Apostles could not have conceded to Paul that the gentiles should be released from its provisions. By advancing half the way with him they in reality granted his whole principle. They recognised that he was no innovator but was merely carrying out to its logical issue the authentic teaching of the church. On the other hand, while it was subordinate to faith, the Law had possessed a certain value. By the decision of the Apostles a place was still reserved for it, and we have no right to suppose that they were actuated by mere policy or timidity. Their sympathies, on the contrary, seem to have been on the side of the Law, and they did not

make their partial concession without some misgiving. The church, as they knew it, had always held to the Law in the belief that thus alone it could realise its vocation. Whatever concessions might be made to the new requirements, the church must still, in some manner, attach itself to the Law.

In the decision of the council, therefore, we can recognise the attempt to do justice to both sides of a twofold tradition which had come down from the earlier days. Confronted with the definite question whether the Law must be imposed on all who sought salvation through Christ, the Apostles had no choice but to declare on the side of freedom. Christianity, they had to acknowledge, was wholly independent of the Law. Yet they did not feel themselves at liberty to break with the Law entirely. Some compromise must be adopted whereby the new religion might still remain anchored to it as it had been from the beginning. What was the motive that underlay this hopeless effort to retain the Law while in principle it was discarded? Other influences may have played their part and have determined the form of the compromise, but behind them all, if our reasoning has been correct, was the feeling that the church must justify its title to be the new Israel. As the Ecclesia it was not merely a spiritual community now asserting itself for the first time, but was one with God's elect people in

the past. The destiny it sought to fulfil was that to which God had been guiding his saints through all the centuries of Jewish history. His promises had been given to the fathers and could only be inherited by those who stood in the line of true succession. Thus to early Christian thinking it was imperative that the church should preserve its continuity with the historical Israel. It was indeed the new community, and membership in it was conditioned solely by the confession of Jesus as Lord. But, none the less, it represented Israel, and its claims were rooted in this identity with God's chosen people. For this reason it was deemed necessary that the Law should obtain at least a formal recognition even though the church was now founded on the new principle of faith. In itself the Law could effect nothing toward the purpose of salvation, but it was the characteristic mark of Israel, inseparable from the covenant which God had made with his people. By discarding the Law the Christian community might sever that vital connection with the past which constituted it the Ecclesia.

When we thus conceive of the primitive attitude a whole side of Paul's polemic becomes more clearly intelligible. He set himself to demonstrate not only that the Law cannot be the ground of salvation but that it has no bearing on the essential character of the church. The true Israel, he argues, has always been independent of the

Law. Centuries before Moses God had made his covenant with Abraham on the basis of faith alone, and ever since he had reckoned as his people those who participated in the faith of Abraham. There was no need, therefore, that the Christian church should cling to the Law in the fear that otherwise it might miss the inheritance that had descended through the elect people. By adopting faith as its one principle it maintained its continuity with that true Israel which had ever existed within the nation. In this way Paul vindicates the claim of the church to be a purely spiritual community. For him, as for the Apostles before him, the Ecclesia takes up the vocation of Israel and thus becomes heir to those promises of God which cannot be broken. But the conception is now set free from all its national limitations. Bound up though it is with the past history of the Jewish people, the Ecclesia is the communion of faith into which the faithful of all lands and times have the right of entrance.

It may be concluded, therefore, that in spite of its apparent dependence on Judaism the church was conscious from the outset of a separate place and calling. The fidelity to the Law, which might seem to mark it as a mere Jewish sect, is to be explained from the fundamental conception of the Ecclesia as it was understood by the primitive disciples. They believed that as the new com-

munity, ordained by God to possess the kingdom, they were the true Israel and must secure their title by linking themselves with the Israel of the past. For this reason they conformed to the national traditions, but their aim all the time was to attach themselves not to the nation but to the "remnant"—the Israel which was, indeed, the people of God. It was not till the advent of Paul that the confusion of ideas, natural to the early days, was dissolved and the Ecclesia became aware that it could realise its vocation as the spiritual Israel apart from the observance of the Law. But even in the initial period it took its stand on principles which were radically incompatible with Judaism and whose import could hardly be mistaken by reflecting minds. (1) It reverted from the legal to the prophetic conception of religion. Ever since John the Baptist a movement had been in process which was essentially a revolt from the Law, although in its earlier phases its true character was partially concealed. Jesus himself was the grand representative of this prophetic revival, and for those who based their lives on his teaching the Law could have nothing but a formal value. It was replaced by an inward law of righteousness from which there was no appeal. (2) It demanded a recognition of Jesus as Lord and declared that this confession of Jesus was the one thing necessary for salvation. Paul at a later time gave a new and profounder meaning to

the idea of faith in Christ. He made it clear that faith was sufficient in itself and could only be neutralised by any attempt to combine it with obedience to the Law. But the truth which Paul established by theological argument must have come home to men in a practical way from the first. It was impossible for the church to serve two masters. By the acceptance of Christ as Lord the authority of the Law was inwardly broken, and the formal emancipation from it was only a matter of time. (3) It claimed to be the community of the Spirit. This, indeed, was the chief characteristic of the church, that it was endued already with that divine power which would be manifested in the new age. As distinguished from all other societies, which were subject to rules and ordinances, it was controlled by the direct action of the Spirit. For a community of this kind there was no real place in Judaism. No man can have felt the presence in him of the new power without some sense of the contradiction which was pointed out by Paul: "If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the Law."

That the bond between Christianity and Judaism was never much more than a formal one is evident, if from nothing else, from the early progress of the mission. It was formerly assumed that Paul was the first to carry the gospel to the gentiles, and that he ventured on this great experiment in the strength of his conviction that

the Law had now ceased to be binding. If Christianity before Paul was a mere sect of Judaism, we have little choice but to accept this theory of its extension. Against all approach to the gentiles the Law would have constituted an insuperable barrier and the wider movement could only have been contemplated after Paul had won his victory. But it is now admitted by practically all students of the apostolic age that Paul entered on the mission when it was already in full progress. Right on from the death of Stephen, if not earlier, the gospel had been offered alike to Jews and gentiles, and Paul's chief fellow worker was Barnabas, one of the trusted leaders of the Jerusalem church. We have to think of a mission that began not abruptly, in consequence of a sudden break with primitive tradition, but naturally and imperceptibly. Although themselves Jews and faithful in their observance of the Law, the disciples were conscious that it had little to do with the Christian message. They took for granted that faith was the one condition of salvation, and willingly received gentile believers on this ground alone. As yet they acted spontaneously, in accordance with their instinctive sense of the nature and purpose of the gospel. When they came to reflect on all the issues involved their judgment was perplexed, and the later Jewish converts, who had not grasped the essential idea of Christianity, were eager to make

the most of their misgivings. But the attitude of the primitive church to Judaism was one of freedom. It was recognised that Jesus Christ had been the mediator of a new covenant independent of the Law.

LECTURE VI

LIFE IN THE PRIMITIVE COMMUNITY

THE disciples were drawn to Jerusalem by the hope of participating in the triumph of Jesus when he would return as Messiah and inaugurate the kingdom of God. Believing, as they did, that the consummation was close at hand, they had no programme for the future and made no effort to build up an organised society. Their impulse was simply to resume the fellowship in which they had been united during Jesus' lifetime. As his disciples, they had stood to one another in a relation of brotherhood, and now, in the interval of waiting, they aimed at preserving this relation. Little by little, as the community increased in numbers and entered on its larger mission, the original aim was modified in various directions but was never consciously abandoned. The church of the later time was the direct outcome of that attempt to perpetuate the brotherhood which had been instituted by Jesus.

We have seen, however, that from the first a deeper significance was involved in the brotherhood of the disciples. Jesus himself had connected it with his proclamation of the new age when all

distinctions of rank and class and family were to disappear. The old order was presently to give place to another in which the will of God would be all in all and men would acknowledge their kinship as the children of God. Jesus called his disciples as heirs of this coming kingdom. His purpose, in all his intercourse with them, was to prepare them for the kingdom by moulding their lives into harmony with its conditions. For this reason he sought to inspire them with the feeling of brotherhood. They were to think of themselves as not merely comrades in the same cause but as the first-fruits of a new and more perfect type of society. In their relations to one another they were to exemplify that higher law of love and mutual service which would be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

From this point of view we must understand the anxiety of the church during the whole of the early period to maintain the feeling among its members that they were all brethren. It is easy, no doubt, to adduce many seeming analogies from the practice of other religious and philosophical sects of the time. Men who had grouped themselves together round the name of the same teacher for the pursuit of a common ideal naturally took upon them the title of brethren, although its use in many cases was little more than conventional. It is easy, too, to show how the circumstances of early Christianity were sufficient in

themselves to compel an intimate form of association. The scattered Christian communities, struggling for their very existence in the midst of a hostile world, could only survive when the virtue of φιλαδελφία—love and helpfulness within the community—was exalted to the highest place. This need for a fraternal bond was never more urgent than in the first critical years at Jerusalem. But when all allowance is made for the various influences which may have strengthened the idea of brotherhood, we have to seek for its origin in that consciousness of their vocation that had been impressed on the disciples by Jesus himself. He had taught them that they stood for the new order of things in which all inequalities, all division between man and man, would disappear. Their relation to one another even now was to anticipate in some measure that which would obtain in the kingdom. It is true that Jesus insisted on a love to men far wider than is contemplated by the "new commandment" of the Fourth Gospel; and in the parable of the good Samaritan and the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount he protested, in so many words, against the exclusive ideals which were afterward adopted by the church. Yet the φιλαδελφία of the later time had its roots in a conception which underlay the whole teaching of Jesus. He looked for a new society governed by a new spirit of love and service, and as the nucleus

of this future community he formed a band of disciples who were united together as brethren.

The idea of brotherhood, therefore, was involved in the very nature of the church and governed the life of its members from the beginning. It would not have been surprising if the disciples of Jesus had been led to isolate themselves in a semi-monastic union similar to that of the contemporary Jewish sect of the Essenes. Perhaps at the outset there was a real danger that the Christian movement might spend itself in the formation of a sterile community of this kind—a community of enthusiasts secluded from the outward world and content with their own fellowship. From any such danger the church was saved by two circumstances. On the one hand, instead of remaining in Galilee, where they might have lived as a self-contained society, the disciples were impelled to settle at Jerusalem. In the great city they could only realise their communal life in an imperfect fashion, and had to break into separate groups even for the purposes of worship. Whether they would or not, they were thrown into constant intercourse with the people around them, and the cause which might otherwise have been confined within a narrow circle was forced to become active and missionary in its character. On the other hand, they were protected still more effectually by the example they had inherited from Jesus. In contrast

with John the Baptist, he had come eating and drinking and had purposely avoided all appearance of carrying on an esoteric mission. He had consistently rebuked the Pharisaic spirit of exclusiveness. His teaching, with all its commendation of brotherly love, had never failed to lay the chief stress on the larger human sympathies and duties. With this example of Jesus fresh in their memories, the disciples could not shut themselves up to a life of secluded fellowship. As the new community they were bound by special ties to one another and stood apart from the world; yet they entertained no thought of a formal separation. It was by thus perfecting itself as a brotherhood, while maintaining its place in the larger organism, that the church grew at last into a world-wide power.

The disciples, then, sought to perpetuate that life of comradeship into which they had been brought by Jesus, and according to the book of Acts they had recourse to a peculiar institution in order to give full effect to the idea that they were brethren. Although they could not unite in a regular monastic society and lived in their own homes, scattered throughout the city, they yet contributed their wealth to a common stock. Each individual was supported and cared for by the community as a whole. There is no portion of Luke's narrative which has been more often

called in question than this account he has given us of the communal life of the early church. It is objected, for one thing, that we are here dealing not with facts of history but with certain characteristic ideas of Luke himself. Alike in the Gospel and the Acts his mind turns constantly to the problem of wealth and poverty. The Christian message, as he conceives it, is pre-eminently one of social justice—a message of good tidings to the poor and judgment on their oppressors. In his description of the early communism, it is argued, he has merely set forth in an ideal picture what he imagines to be the true condition of a Christian society. Again, the apparent inconsistencies of the narrative have often been pointed out, and are held to prove that Luke has misunderstood the facts or purposely coloured them in order to bear out his theories. In spite of his assertion that no man called anything his own and that all wealth was divided among the brethren as a matter of course, he yet singles out for special praise the conduct of Barnabas, who parted with his possessions. Likewise in the story of Ananias and Sapphira, it is implied that no member of the church was under obligation to throw his belongings into the common stock. Ananias is told explicitly by Peter that his goods were his own and that he was free to dispose of them as he thought best. His offence consisted not in withholding them but in the falsehood whereby, in a

spirit of vainglory, he had professed to renounce everything while only sacrificing a part. In view of these contradictions in the narrative it has been inferred that the so-called community of goods was nothing more than a large liberality such as naturally accompanied the religious enthusiasm.

But these exceptions which have been taken to the record in Acts cannot be regarded as conclusive. (1) It is, indeed, true that Luke lays a noticeable emphasis on the social aspects of the Gospel, but we have no right to set this down to some mere predilection of his own. As a matter of fact, he has little to say about wealth and poverty in the later chapters of Acts, although opportunities were certainly not wanting. The subject appears to interest him only in those parts of his work where he is concerned with the teaching of Jesus and the life of the primitive church. From this it may be fairly concluded that he is influenced not so much by some theory of his own as by those traditions of the Palestinian church on which he has drawn so largely. A belief persisted in the Christian communities of Palestine that Jesus had denounced the sins of wealth and taught the equality of rich and poor, and we have no valid reason to doubt that this account of his teaching was well founded. In later Christianity, by a process we can easily understand, his gospel of equality was softened into a demand for generous giving and due con-

sideration of the poor. But among the native Palestinian churches the true drift of the teaching was not thus obscured, and Luke has preserved the colouring of this tradition.

(2) It is possible to make too much of the apparent inconsistencies in Luke's account of the primitive communism. From his singling out of special instances in which men parted with their possessions, we may, indeed, infer that there was no formal and binding rule. The sacrifice of private wealth for the sake of the brethren was a voluntary one, and a certain credit attached to those who made it. This was in keeping with the whole character of the early church, which was not an organisation imposing a regular discipline on its members but a free community of the Spirit. But, although the surrender was voluntary and a few devoted men are specially commemorated, it does not follow that their conduct was exceptional. For the most part the disciples were poor and their contributions to the common fund attracted little attention, since they probably received as much as they gave. It was different when men of some substance threw in their lot with the church and, like Barnabas, gave up their possessions. Their action was remembered not because it was an exception to the rule but because it stood out as a signal instance of its observance. The story of Ananias is in this connection particularly instructive. Ananias was evidently a

man of wealth as compared with the brethren generally, and the question was whether he, like the others, would make a complete surrender. If he gave at all he must give everything, otherwise he would betray the principle on which the life of the church had been founded. This, it must be observed, is the point which gives significance to the whole story. What was required of Ananias was not merely his liberality—for this he was prepared to give—but his sacrifice of all individual possessions. In other words, the practice of charity was a quite secondary consideration. The aim of the church was nothing less than to establish a new social principle—that of community of goods—and in reserving part of his wealth Ananias had committed a worse offence than if he had withheld it altogether. He had tried by an unworthy compromise to destroy an essential element in the new order.

How far the incident is historical we cannot now discover, and for our present purpose the question is of minor importance. In any case we have here transmitted to us one of the primitive legends of the church, reminiscent of the early conditions and perhaps of a conflict to which they gave rise. The original aim—thus we may read between the lines of the story—was to insure a real community of goods. Members of the church were expected not merely to exercise a mutual helpfulness but to place their wealth wholly at

the disposal of the brotherhood. In course of time, however, as numbers increased and the first ardour began to wane, this ideal became ever harder to realise. Converts of some worldly standing were inclined to reason that they sufficiently discharged their duty if they gave liberally to the common fund and that they need not sacrifice all. This attempt to substitute mere beneficence for community of goods did not succeed without a struggle. It was argued by the stricter party that to withhold a portion was a worse sin than to give nothing, and the story of Ananias and Sapphira may have grown up in support of this view. Whatever may be its foundation in fact, it bears clear traces, in its present form, of some such polemical intention. The real sin of Ananias may possibly have consisted in this—that he was the first to rebel against an ideal which in the nature of things was impracticable. His view of the social obligations of a Christian was destined before long to supersede that of Peter, but we need not wonder at the opposition which it encountered. The change from community of goods to mere liberality in giving involved a radical departure from the original conception of the church.

There is no reason, then, to question the trustworthiness of this part of the narrative of Acts. Luke may have heightened the picture of the communism of the primitive church, but the facts

may well have come to him from an authentic tradition. On purely critical grounds, there is no section of his history which has better claims to acceptance than that which deals with the community of goods. The institution is described in two separate passages (Acts 2 : 44–46; 4 : 34 *ff.*), which bear all the marks of being fragments of two different sources. It was attested, therefore, by both the documents on which Luke appears to have chiefly drawn for his knowledge of the earliest days.

What was the meaning of this communism? No doubt the practice of it was rendered more feasible by the expectation of an almost immediate coming of the kingdom. Within an interval that might be measured by days or weeks the present order of things would come to an end, and earthly possessions would cease to have any value. No better use could be made of them for the short time that remained than to share them with the brethren, so that all might wait for the return of the Lord without worldly distraction. But we cannot account in this manner for the requirement—belonging, as we have seen, to the essence of the institution—that those who gave up their wealth must withhold nothing. It seems necessary to seek for the true explanation along two lines: First, it was demanded of all who identified themselves with the kingdom that they should make a solemn renunciation of everything

that belonged to the old life. Jesus himself had called for this complete surrender, and his rule was still insisted on. It was felt that, apart from any benefit which the wealth might bring to others, the sacrifice of it had in itself a religious value, and an attempt to compromise, as Peter impressed on Ananias, was a sin against the Holy Spirit. But again, this renunciation, necessary for those who professed the new faith, was brought into service to the idea of brotherhood. The church was representative of the new order, in which all would be equal and would be animated by a single spirit of love and devotion. In that society of the future there could be no such thing as individual possession, and the aim of the church was to realise in its life now the law of the kingdom. Thus the community of goods was no accident of primitive custom, due to the fact that the disciples were still a little group of comrades who lived together. It was the immediate outcome of the church's consciousness of its vocation. The heirs of the kingdom had broken with the ordinances of this world, in which each man held by his own, and had conformed themselves to the law of the new age, when all would be brethren.

In the earliest form of government and administration we may discern a similar effort to realise in practice the inward idea of the church. The

facts, however, as given by Luke are meagre at the best and cannot be accepted without careful sifting. He wrote at a time when the church had attained to a certain measure of organisation, in the light of which he reconstructs the primitive conditions. The little company of believers, held together by a common enthusiasm, becomes for him a regular society with stated officers and ordinances like the Pauline communities of his own day. He writes, moreover, under the influence of his theory as to the development of the Christian mission. The twelve Apostles are regarded as a sort of sacred college to which the task of the propagation of the gospel has been formally intrusted. All initiative in the life of the church is vested in the twelve; and if they adopt colleagues to assist them in practical affairs it is only that they may keep themselves more free for their higher missionary duties. At the head of the twelve stands Peter. He acts as president in all deliberations, and exercises a general authority in the concerns of the church.

But while he thus adapts the facts to a given theory, Luke is sufficiently faithful to his sources to afford us at least some glimpses into the true nature of the primitive organisation. It is evident, on his own showing, that the church recognised no official leadership. On the contrary, pains were taken to insure that all the members should rank as equal and be admitted to their

share in the direction of the common life. No matter of importance was decided without a meeting of the whole community. These assemblies must have been increasingly difficult to convene as the number of the converts grew, but no decision was valid until it had thus received the general consent. In view of this power exercised by the assembly, the primitive church has sometimes been described as a pure democracy, and the description is a just one in so far as we must reckon, here as elsewhere, with the idea of brotherhood. But the authority to which the church submitted was not in the last resort that of the assembly, or of some leader or body of leaders, but that of the living Spirit. Sometimes the will of the Spirit was ascertained by the casting of lots in the presence of the assembly. More usually it revealed itself in the process of earnest deliberation, after prayer had been offered for the guidance of the higher power. Certain individual men were acknowledged to be "full of the Spirit," and to the counsels of such men a predominant weight was given. But obedience was rendered not to the men but to the Spirit that uttered itself through them; and the Spirit, while it made use of special instruments, was the possession of the whole community. Before any deliverance could be accepted as from the Spirit, it had to commend itself to the mind and conscience of all.

What, then, was the position occupied by the

twelve in this self-governing community? It is evident that they were invested with no formal authority, as Luke would appear to suggest. That a special consideration should attach to them was only natural, for they were not only the chosen companions of Jesus but the representatives of the church in its character of the new Israel. The first action of the community, on its reassembling at Jerusalem, was to fill the vacant place of Judas so that the significant number of twelve might be again complete. But while they thus enjoyed a certain precedence, it rested wholly on sentiment and carried with it no prerogative. Concerning all of them, except two or three, the record is entirely silent, from which we may gather that they remained in the background, exercising little or no influence in the counsels of the church. The prestige belonging to the original twelve did not entitle to a place of leadership unless it was conjoined with special gifts of personality.

The belief that the Twelve formed an inner group which directed the life of the community is no doubt due in part to the later confusion between the personal disciples of Jesus and the Apostles. At what time the word "Apostle" came into use we cannot tell. Paul employs it in connection with one of the appearances of the risen Christ, but most probably he avails himself by anticipation of the convenient term in order to include James and other notable disciples with

the twelve. From the literal meaning of the word we should naturally infer that it was first adopted when the mission had commenced and denoted those who were set apart for missionary work. For such work the highest kind of spiritual endowment was necessary, and the men chosen would be those who stood first in the estimation of the church. But whatever may have been the origin of the name it was evidently not restricted to the twelve. They may have ranked as Apostles by a sort of prescriptive right, but others took their place beside them or above them. From incidental notices in Paul's writings alone* it is possible to draw up a considerable list of "apostles" who were not numbered with the twelve. So far as there was a group of leaders in the church, it consisted of these apostles, but their authority was not formal or official. They were simply the men who were marked out by an exceptional gift of the Spirit for work of peculiar importance. In accepting their leadership the church in no way sacrificed its independence, for it was conscious all the time of obeying the Spirit, of which they were the instruments.

During the first years at Jerusalem a unique position was occupied by Peter. A subsequent age could only explain his pre-eminence on the ground that Jesus himself had commissioned him

* *Cf.* Gal. 1 : 19; I Cor. 9 : 6; II Cor. 8 : 23; Romans 16 : 7; I Cor. 12 : 28.

to take the place of overseer in his church.* Of such a commission, however, the earlier history knows nothing. It represents Peter as at first the leader among the Apostles, and then as gradually declining in influence until he entirely disappears behind James, on the one hand, and Paul, on the other. Indeed, the case of Peter illustrates for us in the most striking fashion the true nature of the primitive control. Peter held authority not by formal appointment or as president of the twelve but in virtue of his personal gift, and he retained it only so long as that gift was indispensable. Without any outstanding qualities of will or intellect he possessed in the fullest measure that enthusiastic faith which is the one thing needful at the beginning of a great movement. As the most ardent of the disciples, Peter assumed the leadership, but it was never allowed to harden into a settled authority. As the conditions changed, men of other gifts came forward and directed the life of the church. Its loyalty was pledged to no individual leader, but only to the Spirit which was ever revealing its will by a new voice.

Thus, in the government of the church, as in the community of goods, an endeavour was made to give practical effect to the idea of brotherhood. Jesus himself had established no order of precedence in his band of disciples, but had declared

* Matt. 16 : 18, 19.

that the whole system of ranks and dignities belonged to the former age and must now pass away. On this principle the new society based itself. It claimed to be a brotherhood in which the law of equality that would hold good in the kingdom of God was already realised and which was governed solely by the Spirit. Inevitably there were leaders, but they held no stated office. They were agents of the Spirit, which was supposed to reside in the whole church, although it might utter its will by chosen members. At best, the leaders could only offer counsel and suggestion. Before their word was valid it had to commend itself to all the brethren, met in assembly, as the authentic utterance of the Spirit. In the first ardent days, when "the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one mind," this ideal of a brotherhood was capable of at least a partial fulfilment. The lack of a regular organisation was more than made up by the spontaneous zeal with which all devoted themselves to the common cause. But in the nature of things the early conditions could not last. We learn in the book of Acts how, as the society became larger and more heterogeneous, there arose disputes and jealousies which could not be dealt with except by some kind of an official system. Indeed, the very effort to maintain a communal principle could only result in the defeat of its own object. It became more and more evident that if equal privileges were to be shared

by all they must be safeguarded by a fixed order of administration.

Thus far the attempt to anticipate the conditions of the kingdom was an impracticable one and had to be abandoned after a brief experiment. But there was another and more fruitful result of that endeavour to mould the church in accordance with its inward idea. As the heirs of the future kingdom the disciples were committed to a new rule of life. By their mode of thought and action, and their intercourse with one another and the world around them, they were required to exemplify that higher law which would obtain in the new age.

We do an injustice to early Christianity and fail to account for its marvellous achievement when we conceive of it merely as an enthusiasm, inspired by the hope of a great consummation in the near future. Its true character is better described by the expressive name, commonly applied to it in the first age, of "the way"—the new method of life. Jesus himself had come forward in his lifetime with an ethical message. To the very end the mass of the people knew nothing of his Messianic claim, but reverenced him as a "prophet" who taught a better righteousness than that of the scribes and Pharisees. The task devolved on his disciples not only of asserting his Messiahship but of continuing his work as a

prophet. Nothing is more remarkable in the Epistles of Paul than the large space which is devoted to purely ethical precepts. His letters in this respect, as he himself indicates, reflected his oral teaching, and the practice of Paul was modelled on that of the missionaries generally. They treated the moral interest as a fundamental one, and amidst all theological differences they continued to enforce the same broad principles of morality. It was this ethical consistency more than anything else that preserved the unity of the church through all the changes and controversies of the first century.

The teaching of Jesus had been chiefly concerned with the moral life; yet we mistake its character when we think of him in some vague sense as an ethical teacher. The new righteousness which he taught had a direct relation to his central message of the kingdom of God. In view of the approaching advent of the kingdom he sought to effect in men a "change of mind," of such a nature that they should be inwardly assimilated to the new order. The commandments given "to them of old time" were intended only for the present age, and in place of them he revealed the higher rule of obedience that would hold good in the great future. It is from this point of view alone that we can rightly understand the morality of Jesus. Many of his precepts, no doubt, have reference to conditions that would pass away with the

present age, and it is not difficult, by a literal interpretation, to dissolve them into a mere "interim ethic." But we have to regard them as so many applications to existing conditions of certain new principles of absolute moral validity. By the following out of these principles men could anticipate the law of the kingdom and do God's will on earth as it is done in heaven.

When we apprehend this connection between the ethical teaching of Jesus and his message of the kingdom we can discern the motive which quickened the early Christian morality. Since the church was the community of the new age, its members were required to exhibit in themselves a new type of character answering to their vocation. They had part in the kingdom only in so far as their lives were ordered in strict accordance with that higher law which would prevail in it. And for their knowledge of this law they were dependent on the precepts that had been laid down by Jesus. We are sometimes asked to believe that in the fervour of the apocalyptic hope the actual teaching of Jesus fell into the background and has only been preserved to us by a fortunate accident. But the truth is that the hope invested the teaching with an urgent significance. Jesus, who was now the exalted Lord, had himself marked out the way for his people. If they would participate in the kingdom, which was already on the point of dawning, they must

know and accept its ordinances as he had taught them.

In the early chapters of Acts nothing is told us in detail of the endeavour to carry into practice the moral ideals of Jesus. The task which the writer sets himself is to record the more memorable incidents, and he takes for granted, as historians are wont to do, the quiet Christian activity which was all the time the chief business of the church. We are reminded, however, in one striking and comprehensive verse that along with all the outward progress there was a building up of the church from within. "They continued to adhere stedfastly to the teaching of the Apostles and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2 : 42). Four elements of the church's life are here singled out as characteristic: obedience to a teaching imparted by the Apostles, association in a brotherhood, participation in a common meal, and meetings for worship. What is implied in that "persistence in the Apostles' teaching" which is here given the foremost place?

Several modern writers, of whom A. Seeberg* is the chief representative, have taken the brief statement in Acts as the corner-stone of an elaborate theory. Reasoning from the well-known fact that toward the end of the first century the can-

* "Der Katechismus des Urchristentums"—the first of a series of books in support of the same thesis.

didates for baptism were regularly instructed in the main outlines of Christian belief and morality, they have concluded that this custom was in force from the earliest days. The Apostles drew up a formula or catechism—the precursor of the later "Didache"—which became the norm of all Christian teaching and has left its traces everywhere in the New Testament. If this theory could be established all previous conceptions of the early development would have to undergo a radical revision, but the arguments against it seem to be decisive. It is hardly conceivable that in the first days of eager spontaneous faith the new beliefs were set down in a stereotyped form. All our evidence points rather to a condition of things in which the beliefs themselves were indeterminate and the mere expression of them could be varied at will. The Lord's Prayer, the Beatitudes, the formulæ connected with the supper, these were the elements of Christian tradition which would most naturally have become fixed, and yet they have been transmitted to us in widely different versions. Until the conflict with heresy which began near the close of the century, the church refused to bind itself to any defined standards. It was this that opened the door to controversy and division. It was this, too, that made possible the freedom and sincerity and the many-sided development which give a unique character to the thinking of the first age. But the notice in

Acts is in itself sufficiently suggestive without burdening it with fanciful interpretations. It informs us that from the very outset an important place was assigned to the work of teaching; that is, to some kind of regular instruction as distinguished from prophetic appeal. We gather from it, moreover, that this teaching imparted by the Apostles was mainly concerned with the direction of conduct. The members of the church "adhered stedfastly" to the instruction given them, making it their aim to follow it out faithfully in their daily lives.

There is good reason to believe—indeed, this conclusion is almost forced upon us—that the instructions of the Apostles were based on the precepts laid down by Jesus. As the Jewish teachers communicated a tradition which they had themselves acquired from a master, so the disciples of Jesus transmitted his words as they had heard them. The reference in Acts, as we have seen, implies a rule of practice rather than of belief, and the ordinary work of moral instruction was already undertaken by the synagogue. The only teaching which the Apostles were qualified to impart was that of the new righteousness as it had been revealed by Jesus. Here, as most scholars would now admit, we are to look for the ultimate basis of our existing Gospels. No result of New Testament criticism is more certain than that Luke and Matthew had access to a

collection of the sayings of Jesus, which they interwove with the narrative of Mark. The view is now widely accepted that this collection was older than the narrative, but at whatever date it was compiled it had manifestly passed through a number of expansions and revisions before it reached the hands of the evangelists. We may conclude that a process had begun, even in the earliest days, of collecting the Lord's sayings and grouping them in such a manner that they might be easily remembered and transmitted. That all converts were instructed, as a matter of course, in these maxims of Jesus may be inferred from the Epistles of Paul as well as from the Gospels. Apart from the direct echoes of Gospel sayings, which can be traced in Paul—and these are far more numerous than many critics have been willing to grant—we have to consider the whole drift and content of his ethical teaching. He is able to assume that the principles of Christian morality are already known to his readers. In the light of this knowledge which they have received he discusses their difficulties and calls on them to recognise new duties and obligations. It is evident that Paul, in his missionary work, was concerned not merely with the proclamation of certain beliefs but with the moulding of that type of character which was required in Christian men. In this part of his work, which he probably regarded as the most valuable, he followed the path

marked out by Jesus. For him, as for all the missionaries, Christianity was inseparable from that rule of life which was handed down in the teaching of the first Apostles.

The statement in the book of Acts, therefore, is confirmed and illustrated by the evidence which is afforded us elsewhere in the New Testament. The Apostles were the missionaries of the kingdom, and sought to awaken that faith in the risen Christ through which alone it could be entered. But along with this primary duty they were responsible for another hardly less important. They continued the work of Jesus as a moral teacher, imparting to their converts a knowledge of his precepts and shaping the life of the community in accordance with them. To the mind of the primitive church these two duties were bound up together. By the act of faith the convert identified himself with the new order and came henceforth within the sphere of its jurisdiction. But he required to learn the nature of his new obligations. He could have no true part in the future kingdom unless he possessed in himself the will and disposition that were characteristic of God's people. Thus it was necessary that the preaching of the Christian message should be accompanied by a training in the Christian life, and this could only be based on the commandments of Jesus. His words were treasured and handed down as revealing the nature of that new righteousness which

belonged to the kingdom. It is, indeed, probable, as we may gather from Paul's references to the tradition, that the teaching of the Apostles was not exclusively ethical. Sayings of Jesus were transmitted which kept alive the hope of the Parousia and seemed to throw light upon its mysteries. Instruction was given in central facts of the Gospel history, such as the institution of the supper and the appearances of the risen Lord. Stray utterances were preserved from which it was possible to glean directions for worship and administration and for the conduct of the mission, and these acquired an increasing value as time went on. But the primary aim of the Apostles was that of educating their converts in the principles of Christian morality. By enforcing the precepts of Jesus they endeavoured, as he himself had done, to build up a community that should be inwardly conformed to the life of the kingdom.

Toward the end of the century the idea took root in the church, and developed in many unforeseen directions, that Christianity was nothing else than a "new law." Jesus was regarded as a greater Moses, who legislated for the new Israel, and his teaching was formulated as a series of binding enactments. The beginnings of this idea may possibly be traced in Matthew's Gospel, where the cardinal principles of the Christian ethic are gathered up in a single code, delivered

from a mountain, like the Mosaic Law. To the primitive age such a conception of the Lord's teaching was entirely foreign, and it may be set down to the relapse into a Judaistic habit of mind, after the church had become organised as an institution. It was not a new law that Jesus had inaugurated, but a new way. Morality had been based hitherto on a number of commandments outwardly imposed, now it was identified with an inward temper—a will brought into harmony with the will of God. And in this sense the teaching of Jesus was authoritative for his disciples. By obedience to it they sought to realise that type of character which would inherit the kingdom, and of which Jesus himself had been the supreme example. The precepts of Jesus did not exhaust the requirements of the Christian life. As we know from the New Testament writings, they were expanded and supplemented by successive teachers and were applied in new language to changed conditions. None the less they remained normative for the later ethical development. They supplied the constant factor, in virtue of which our religion has maintained its identity amidst all the changes of twenty centuries. Before a generation had passed the theology of the church had shaped for itself many different channels; its institutions had been remodelled; its original forms of worship had given place to others. But the Christian morality was

determined, once and for ever, by the teaching of Jesus.

It was all-important for the future of Christianity that its message of salvation was conjoined from the first with an ethical discipline. If it had stood for nothing more than the apocalyptic hope, the church might have lasted through a brief period of feverish life and then have broken to pieces as the fulfilment of its dreams became ever more remote and shadowy. It had come into being, however, not only as a society of enthusiasts, waiting for a great crisis, but as an ethical brotherhood intent on obeying the will of God according to the way marked out by Jesus. Amidst all that was visionary and extravagant in its hopes, it thus secured its hold on realities. The ardour which would otherwise have spent itself in a vain enthusiasm was transformed into the motive power for moral endeavour and victory. And through its fidelity to the ethical demands of Jesus the church advanced to a truer and larger comprehension of his message of the kingdom. Under the apocalyptic forms which he took over from the thought of his time, he had set forth his ideal of a higher righteousness and a life of perfect fellowship with God. By doing his will his disciples learned to know of his doctrine. They were disappointed in their earlier hopes only to grow conscious of the true revelation which had been given in Jesus Christ.

LECTURE VII

BAPTISM

From its earliest days the church possessed the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and if we could ascertain their original import we should have the key to the whole problem of primitive Christianity. But here, perhaps more than anywhere else, we need to distinguish carefully between earlier and later conceptions. On its doctrinal side a religion holds fast to its essential principles, although the forms in which they express themselves are constantly changed. But on its ritual side the process is almost always reversed. The forms of primitive rites are maintained with the most jealous tenacity, but they are invested with new meanings. As symbolical actions they lend themselves to a wide variety of interpretation and afford an entrance to ideas which are quite alien to the original worship. This, as all scholars would now be willing to admit, has been the history of the two Christian sacraments. Even within the first generation they began to acquire new values, although to all appearance they remained the

same. To the gentile mind religion was associated with "mysteries," with ritual acts which were supposed to effect certain inward changes; and as Christianity passed into the gentile world its rites assumed this character. Their meaning henceforth was overlaid with mystical ideas by which it was obscured or entirely cancelled.

The task of understanding these ordinances as they were observed in the primitive church is thus a peculiarly difficult one, for the after-developments which elsewhere help to elucidate the initial beliefs are here a source of confusion. Paul himself has little assistance to offer us in the attempt to retrace the earlier tradition. With his doctrine of the sacraments we enter precisely that domain of his thought in which he is least careful to preserve a continuity with the previous teaching of the church. Sometimes he appears to explain them after the analogy of pagan rites in order to make certain aspects of truth more intelligible to his gentile readers. Sometimes he avails himself of their imagery and suggestion for the purpose of enforcing the characteristic ideas of his own theology. In no case can we be altogether sure that the view represented by Paul has a real affinity with that of the older Apostles.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper, as the two ritual observances in Christian worship, came at an early time to be linked together and to be

construed in the light of common ideas. Paul, in a well-known passage of I Corinthians,* seems to assume a necessary connection between them, and makes out by means of a fanciful exegesis that they both had their counterparts in God's dealings with his people in the wilderness. In the Johannine writings they appear as complementary to each other—typifying, in some mysterious fashion, the two aspects of the revelation in Christ.† It was inevitable that the two ordinances should thus in course of time be conjoined, and that Christian thought should seek to assign to each of them its distinctive function and meaning. But historically they were separate rites, which found their way independently into the life of the church and were regarded differently. To understand their place in the primitive community it is necessary to forget their subsequent correlation and to consider each of them by itself.

It may be accepted as certain that the rite of baptism was not instituted by Jesus. In view of the importance that was attached to it at a later time, some account of its origin would undoubtedly have been included in the Gospel history if there had been anything in the work of Jesus which might be so interpreted. As it is, the command to baptise only finds a place in a closing verse of Matthew's Gospel, which bears all the

* I Cor. 10 : 1 *ff.* † John 19 : 35; I John 5 : 6–8.

marks of a later ecclesiastical addition. The fourth evangelist, with all his predilection for sacramental doctrine, expressly admits that Jesus himself did not baptise, although he adds, in a somewhat confused and inconsequent fashion, that the rite was performed by his disciples.* But, while Jesus thus refrained from any ceremonial expression of his message, he had himself undergone baptism at the hands of John. It is more than probable that several of his disciples had similarly been baptised by John before they threw in their lot with the new teacher. The way had thus been prepared in Jesus' own lifetime for the adoption of the rite within the Christian church.

It was so adopted, if we may trust our records, at the very commencement. On the day of Pentecost, according to the story in Acts, three thousand converts were admitted by baptism, and although we may regard this particular incident as legendary, we have no reason to doubt the implied assertion that there had never been a time when the church did not administer baptism to its converts. The evidence of Acts is fully supported by the allusions to primitive custom which are scattered through Paul's Epistles. In two different passages the Apostle indicates that he himself had been baptised as a matter of course after his conversion.† He takes for granted that the

* John 4 : 1, 2. † I Cor. 12 : 13; Romans 6 : 3.

rite was in universal use among the Christian communities, and his fullest references to it are in the Epistle to the Romans, addressed to a church which he had not personally visited and which probably represented, more than any other, the normal practices and traditions. Everywhere in the New Testament baptism is accepted without question as an ordinance that has always been valid—an ordinance that belongs to "the first principles of the doctrine of Christ."*

How are we to explain this early adoption of an observance for which there was no sanction in the commandment of Jesus himself? The question can be partly answered from what we know of the religious customs of the time. In all the contemporary religions the ritual element was of primary importance, and rites of purification, based on the natural symbolism of cleansing by water, were more widely practised than any others. Judaism itself was largely concerned with lustrations of various kinds, and in at least one Jewish sect, that of the Essenes, baptism played a conspicuous part. The closest analogy in Judaism to the Christian rite was the baptism of proselytes; and this has been singled out by many scholars as the immediate model adopted by the church. As aliens were admitted into the commonwealth of Israel by means of a baptism, so a like ceremony was employed in receiving converts

* Heb. 6 : 1.

into the new Israel. One objection, however, seems fatal to this derivation of the Christian from the Jewish rite. The baptism of proselytes was intended for gentiles, and from this point of view its whole significance must be explained. Their connection with false gods and forbidden customs was supposed to have left on the proselytes a stain of defilement which could only be washed away by a solemn act of purification. But in the days when baptism was first adopted by the church it was administered solely to Jewish converts. We cannot for a moment conceive that Jews would have submitted to a rite which assimilated them to the heathen, and it would have been contrary to the central interest of the church to have imposed on them such a rite. As the Ecclesia in which the hopes of Israel had now come to fulfilment it was not at liberty to treat its Jewish converts as if they were proselytes from an alien faith.

The adoption of the rite may be accounted for most naturally by the example and influence of John the Baptist. Before Jesus had yet appeared John had proclaimed the coming of the kingdom, and had offered a "baptism for the remission of sins" in view of the imminent crisis. This baptism of John was closely related to his message and has doubtless to be explained in the light of the apocalyptic tradition. It had been assumed from the time of the prophets onward that the

kingdom was reserved for the righteous and that a cleansing from sin was the necessary condition of entering it. John offered his baptism to those who sought to undergo this cleansing. It was administered after a profession of repentance, and to this extent was a purely symbolic rite betokening an inward moral change. But it is hardly possible to doubt that John attributed a real validity to his baptism. It conveyed a guarantee to the baptised that God had accepted them and had forgiven their sins. They could look forward with confidence to the coming judgment, since they had been washed in that "fountain for sin and for uncleanness"* which God had promised to open for his people in the latter days.

Why Jesus began his ministry by submitting to the baptism of John is a problem which has baffled all conjecture from the time of the evangelists until now. Perhaps the knowledge of his own vocation had not yet awakened in him, and he came to the baptism simply as one of the faithful in Israel who sought to fit themselves, by this cleansing rite, for participation in the kingdom. Or perhaps his true motive was that suggested in the record of Matthew: "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." In a solemn and emphatic manner he identified himself with the hopes of his countrymen and acknowledged the divine commission of John. But, although he

* Zech. 13 : 1.

was himself baptised, it is clear that he regarded the rite as of secondary importance and did not require it of those who desired to join his fellowship. Some of his disciples may have come over to him from John, but the greater number were of his own choosing and were accepted on the ground of faith alone. This dispensing with a rite which had now become so closely associated with the hope of the kingdom can only be explained as deliberate. With a profound instinct he avoided all confusion of his moral and spiritual demands with mere ceremonial practice. But while he discarded the rite he sanctioned the idea embodied in it—that the kingdom was for the righteous and could only be entered by way of repentance and the forgiveness of sin. Sometimes he speaks as if a "change of mind" itself carries with it the assurance of divine forgiveness. The prodigal has only to arise and turn to his father, and can feel in that very act that he will be pardoned and accepted. Elsewhere he seems to regard forgiveness as a special gift which he himself has the right to bestow in the name of God. "Thy sins be forgiven thee" is his constant formula when he wishes to impart the blessing which he values most. Jesus insisted, like John, that sin must be forgiven before a man could enter the kingdom; but as John had conveyed this forgiveness by an impressive rite, so Jesus communicated it by his word.

Here, most probably, we are to look for the ultimate reason for the adoption of baptism by the church. Jesus had not enjoined it—indeed, had purposely refrained from it—yet it connected itself with a well-marked element in his own teaching. He had declared that no man could enter the kingdom unless he repented and became like a little child, and had pronounced his word of forgiveness over those whom he received. After his death, when new converts sought admission into the brotherhood, the disciples were anxious to maintain the conditions which had been required by Jesus himself. But how was it now possible to meet these conditions? Jesus had bestowed the gift of forgiveness in virtue of a special authority, exercised by him as the divinely appointed Messiah. The disciples could claim no such authority. They shrank from arrogating to themselves a power which was recognised by Jewish piety as belonging to God only. In their perplexity they fell back on the rite instituted by John. He had introduced it as a standing ordinance, available henceforth for all who offered themselves for the kingdom. After his own death, as we know from several references in the book of Acts, it was continued as a matter of course within the sect that called itself by his name. The disciples of Jesus, likewise, took over the baptism of John as an ordinance given by God for the remission of sins.

To our minds the adoption of baptism is apt to appear as a startling innovation in Christian practice. Jesus had scarcely departed when his gospel was allied with an external rite, analogous to those which obtained in many forms of heathen worship. From this alone it has been inferred that alien influences must have been at work from the first, profoundly modifying the character of the new religion. But in view of the precedent of John a theory of this kind is untenable. So far from regarding baptism as an innovation, deliberately adopted, we can understand how it established itself of its own accord as soon as the necessity arose of receiving new converts into the brotherhood. It needs to be remembered that the Christian movement was related to that of John in a far closer manner than we commonly suppose. Jesus himself had recognised John to be the Elijah who was to inaugurate the series of events that would culminate in the fulfilment of the kingdom by the Messiah; and our Gospels assume throughout that the mission of John was an integral part of the history that followed.* John was not merely a forerunner, whose work was absorbed in that of Jesus, but had his own significance for the kingdom, and his words and acts continued to be authoritative. Thus, it is not difficult to explain how his peculiar rite passed over, almost as a matter of course, into the Chris-

* *Cf.* also Acts 1 : 5; 10 : 37.

tian church. Although it had not been practised by Jesus, it was yet one of the institutions of that new movement of which Jesus had been the central figure, and the reversion to it was easy and natural. At the same time, a distinction seems to have been preserved, in the primitive age, between the essential message of Jesus and this concomitant rite which he had not directly sanctioned. Paul undoubtedly placed a high estimate on baptism and, by associating it with several of his central doctrines, contributed not a little toward the heightening of its significance in the later church. Yet he declares in a remarkable passage that he had purposely refrained from administering the rite, "for Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the gospel."* He recognised, apparently, that baptism in itself was a liturgical act, depending for its worth on the inward spiritual change which it represented. His work as an Apostle was to effect the inward change, and to this work he confined himself, lest he might create a dangerous confusion in the minds of his converts. In the custom thus followed by Paul we have indications of a feeling which he probably shared with the other Apostles. While they adopted baptism as an indispensable rite, they were conscious that Jesus himself had not required it. In spite of all the sacredness with which it was gradually invested,

* I Cor. 1 : 17.

the sense remained that it had come in from the outside and was alien to the essential gospel.

If the Christian ordinance of baptism was derived from that of John we can hardly be wrong in assigning to it the same fundamental import. In its later as in its earlier phase it was "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." The kingdom of God was destined for the righteous, and before men could hope to participate in it they needed to be cleansed from the defilement of the old life. An opportunity was provided in baptism whereby they might thus break with the past and obtain the assurance of forgiveness. That this was the original purpose of the rite is clearly implied in various references to it in the book of Acts. "Repent and be baptised everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." * "Arise and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." † At the time when Acts was written the mystical ideas of baptism had become generally current, and notices like these can only be explained as reminiscences of an earlier and simpler conception. Traces of it may be discovered in those very passages of Paul's writings which prepare the way for a more advanced doctrine. Baptism, as Paul conceives it, is, in the first instance, a "washing," a "rising into newness of life." ‡

* Acts 2 : 38; *cf.* 3 : 19. † Acts 22 : 16.
‡ I Cor. 6 : 11; Romans 6 : 4.

His further speculations as to its meaning are all influenced and in some degree suggested by this, its primary significance.

Christian baptism, however, was recognised to be something more than the baptism of John. Although outwardly the same and interpreted in the same general fashion, the rite had become a new one and had received a larger import now that it had been adopted into the life of the church. This is brought out emphatically in the curious passage in Acts which tells how the disciples of John whom Paul found at Ephesus were required to undergo a second baptism. The rite as they had previously known it was incomplete and had to be repeated in another form before they could be admitted into the Christian community. We learn from the same passage how the new ordinance was differentiated from the older one. It was administered "in the name of the Lord Jesus," and its higher validity was bound up, apparently, with the use of this formula. At a period subsequent to the apostolic age the threefold name was substituted in baptism for the name of Jesus. The beginnings of this later usage can be traced in certain passages of the New Testament itself, and it is formally adopted in the concluding verses of Matthew's Gospel. But from the book of Acts and the Pauline Epistles it is abundantly clear that the primitive church knew only the simpler formula, and even

so late as the "Didache" it is assumed that this alone is necessary. What, then, was the meaning of this administration of baptism "in the name of Jesus"?

The importance of this question was not fully appreciated till recent years, and no general agreement has yet been reached as to the answer that should be given to it. Hitherto the inquiry has taken its direction, for the most part, from the various analogies which have been discovered in Hellenistic usage. The suggestions thrown out by Deissmann and other philologists have given rise to an entirely new theory of primitive baptism, of which Heitmüller, in his various works, has made himself the chief exponent.* According to this theory, the formula "in the name" or "into the name" of Jesus (the two expressions seem to be practically synonymous †) must be regarded as pointing back to magical ideas inherited from the beliefs of prehistoric times. A name stood for the person who bore it, and he was supposed to be himself, in some manner, present when his name was pronounced. In the case of divine beings, more especially, a mysterious virtue was

* Heitmüller, "Im Namen Jesu"; "Taufe und Abendmahl im Urchristentum."

† The most usual and probably the oldest formula is βαπτίζειν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα. This gradually falls into disuse, and gives place to ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι, or ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι. Too much weight must not be given to the preposition. In all three cases it seems to indicate little more than a mention of the name accompanying the act.

attributed to the name. He who invoked it or carried it engraved on an amulet was brought into a personal relation to the god and could rely on his protection. This, then, it is argued, was the primary meaning of the invocation of the name of Jesus in the ceremony of baptism. The person over whom the name was pronounced entered into a fellowship with Jesus, who shielded him henceforth from the assaults of evil powers. In like manner, too, he passed over into the possession of Jesus. The mention of the name denoted a solemn act of transference whereby he surrendered himself wholly to the new Master. In confirmation of this view of the baptismal formula, appeal is made to many striking parallels in contemporary language, as we have learned to know it from recently discovered documents of common life. Property conveyed by title-deeds was made over "into the name" of him who had purchased it. The legionary was bound to obedience by taking his oath "into the name" of the emperor. Apart from such collateral evidences, the view is supported to some extent by the thought and language of the New Testament itself. It is uniformly assumed that by baptism "in the name of Jesus" the believer has made a surrender of his own will and henceforth belongs to Jesus as his "bondsman" or possession. With this primitive conception of the meaning of baptism the Pauline doctrine of the mys-

tical union with Christ is closely connected. The relation of ownership implied in the rite is construed by Paul as one of personal communion in which the believer identifies himself with Christ.

The theory has called attention to aspects of primitive baptism which have been unduly neglected or misunderstood, but there are several considerations that seem to render it untenable. (1) It rests on the assumption that the one important matter in baptism was the pronouncing over the convert of the name of Jesus. The rite itself is forgotten or becomes a mere accessory, almost superfluous, to the invocation of the name. Now, it may be granted that this invocation was the peculiar mark of Christian baptism, but all our evidence proves that the actual rite was the essential thing. The mention of the name, however we may explain it, was intended to complete the rite and define more closely its scope and character. No theory can be satisfactory unless it deals with the conception of baptism as a whole. The solemn act and the accompanying words were blended together, and the meaning of both of them was vitally affected by this combination.

(2) It imputes to early Christianity a mode of thinking which was alien to its true character. Passages can, no doubt, be adduced from the New Testament in which a magical value seems to be attributed to the name of Jesus—as when it is used in the Gospels for the purposes of exorcism

or by Peter in the book of Acts for the healing of the lame man. Even in these cases it may be questioned whether a magical effect is contemplated, but, however this may be, it is only fair to recognise that healings and exorcisms were in a class by themselves. According to the belief of the time, diseases, especially those of a nervous order, were due to demonic agency and had to be combated by magical means. If the Christians shared the popular belief and substituted the name of Jesus for the divine or angelic names that were commonly employed in exorcism, we have no right to leap to the conclusion that magic was of the essence of their religion. Against the few ambiguous passages we must set the whole evidence of the New Testament. Primitive Christianity was not a matter of incantations and cabalistic signs, but of faith in a new and living power. In the rite of baptism this faith came to expression, and any attempt to explain the baptismal formula by purely magical ideas is inadequate on the face of it. The convert, dedicating himself to Jesus in a moment of spiritual exaltation, must have been thinking of something else than the efficacy of a mysterious name.

(3) It binds down to one narrow and exceptional meaning a phrase that had a much wider significance. By diligent search among the recovered papyri it may, indeed, be shown that "in the name" was occasionally used as a formula de-

noting a peculiar kind of magical transaction. A few stray passages in the New Testament itself may be held to betray a similar usage. But in numerous other instances, which have likewise to be taken into account, no trace of it can be discovered. When Jesus describes the false disciples who say "have we not prophesied in thy name"; when Paul counsels his readers whatsoever they do "to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," it is evident that some larger import must be attached to the phrase. We owe much to modern scholars who have taught us to reinterpret New Testament terms in the light of the current language of the first century, but one cannot but feel that in some instances they have set us on a false track. The religious vocabulary of the early church was mainly borrowed from the Old Testament, and scriptural turns of expression may often have been used, as we use them ourselves, without much thought of their exact meaning. It may have been so with this particular phrase. A hundred familiar verses in Psalms and Prophets made reference to the name of God and bade men trust and rejoice and hope "in his name." We can understand how the phrase may have been transferred to Jesus with little more intention than that of enhancing his power and dignity. It is significant that Paul, in several passages, omits the qualifying phrase altogether and speaks of being baptised "into

Christ." * As the Israelites were "baptised unto Moses" †—were subjected to Moses as the people of his Law—so the believers had come under a certain relation to Christ. It is evident that for Paul the simpler phrase contains in it what is essential in the longer and more formal one. To be baptised "in the name of Jesus" is to "put on Christ," to submit oneself to him in unreserved allegiance.

It may be suggested as not improbable that the phrase has reference to the confession which seems always to have formed an element in Christian baptism. As early as the beginning of the second century this confession had assumed a more extended form and was finally elaborated into the so-called Apostles' Creed. But we can gather from indications in the New Testament that it was originally comprised in the two words Κύριος Ἰησοῦς, "Jesus is Lord." On three separate occasions‡ Paul repeats these words in such a manner as to leave little doubt that he is quoting a formula which his readers will at once recognise as the standard expression of their faith. Of these three passages the most instructive is that in Romans. The Apostle there alludes to a confession with the mouth which gives utterance to the faith awakened by the word of preaching, and which is summed up in the words "Jesus is

* Gal. 3 : 27; Romans 6 : 3. † I Cor. 10 : 2.
‡ Romans 10 : 9; I Cor. 12 : 3; Phil. 2 : 11.

Lord." It may be regarded as practically certain, in view of the whole sequence of ideas, that Paul is here thinking of a declaration of faith that accompanied the saving act of baptism. But if the confession "Jesus is Lord" was thus inseparable from the ordinance we have a clew to the meaning of the vexed phrase "baptised in the name of Jesus." The "name" was not the personal name, employed by way of incantation, but the sovereign title of κύριος. It is this which Paul has in his mind when he speaks of Jesus as bearing "the name that is above every name," and we may well suppose that in ordinary Christian language Jesus' "name" had the accepted meaning of the supreme title which was now his. Of such a usage we seem to discern not a few indications in different books of the New Testament.* Baptism "in the name of Jesus" consisted, therefore, in the acknowledgment of Jesus as the Lord. By so confessing him the convert not only declared his faith in the Messiahship of Jesus but brought himself under a personal allegiance to him. From this time onward he ceased to be his own, he abjured all other authority by which he had formerly been bound and subjected himself to Jesus in the relation of servant to Lord.

This explanation of the phrase "in the name of Jesus" may be suggested as simpler and more in

* *Cf.* Eph. 1 : 21; Heb. 1 : 4; Rev. 19 : 16.

accordance with primitive Christian thought than that which would resolve it into a magical formula. Whether it is correct or not, it serves to bring out the significance which seems always to be conveyed by the phrase. To be baptised in the name of Jesus is to make open confession of him and to surrender oneself to his keeping and authority. It was this confession of Jesus which formed the characteristic mark of Christian baptism. The disciples took over the ordinance of John, regarding it, like him, as the divinely appointed means for the remission of sins; but they associated it with the faith in Jesus. In this manner they transformed it into a new rite expressive of the new Christian ideas.

In two ways the import of the rite was changed when the confession of Jesus was made an essential part of it. (1) The ideas involved in the confession were inevitably blended with those conveyed by the original rite, so that it acquired a richer and more definite meaning. Baptism was still an act of cleansing for the remission of sins, but this cleansing was now related to the faith in Jesus. He had been the mediator of the divine forgiveness, and it was vouchsafed to those who, by confession of his "name," had become his people. A peculiar feature in Paul's doctrine of baptism is his correlation of the ordinance with the death of Christ. It assumes for him the char-

acter of a dramatic act whereby the believer repeats in his own person the Lord's death, with the ensuing burial and resurrection. This interpretation has been singled out by modern writers as distinctively Pauline; indeed, they have here discovered the outstanding difference between Paul's conception of baptism and that which prevailed in the earlier church. But it may reasonably be conjectured that Paul is merely elaborating, in his own fashion, ideas which had already found root in the common belief. We know from Paul's own testimony (I Cor. 15 : 3) that he had received as part of the existing tradition "how that Christ died for our sins according to the scripture"; and it is not improbable that this forgiveness through the death of Christ had connected itself in men's minds with the forgiveness obtained in baptism. The words of Paul appear to indicate that such a connection had already been surmised. "Know ye not," he asks, "that as many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death?" * Addressing the Roman church, which he had not himself evangelised, he appeals to this significance of baptism as to something known; moreover, he suggests that he had been conscious in his own baptism of a participation in the death of Christ. It has always to be remembered that Jesus himself, if we may trust our Gospel records—and on

* Romans 6 : 3.

this point there is no valid reason to doubt their evidence—attached a paramount value to his death. He conceived of it as "a ransom for many"—a means ordained by God for the removal of all hindrances that delayed the coming of the kingdom. In this conviction, impressed by Jesus on his disciples, we probably have the true key to much that seems otherwise inexplicable in the genesis of Christian thought. If this be granted, it is not difficult to understand how the idea of baptism may have linked itself, almost from the outset, with that of the death of Christ. For the Christian, who believed that Christ had offered the ransom for many, baptism did not procure the forgiveness of sins by some efficacy of its own. It availed only for those who by confession of Jesus were "baptised into his death."

(2) The accompanying confession not only modified the original meaning of the rite but added to it a new significance. By means of it the convert was received into the Christian brotherhood and became a participant in its obligations and privileges. There is no evidence that the baptism of John possessed a value of this kind. John gathered around him his own sect of followers, which continued after his death; but the submission to his baptism did not involve membership in the sect. We gather from the Gospel narrative that the majority of those whom John baptised were no further associated

with him or with one another. They resumed their life as ordinary Jews, except that they had now undergone a special purification in view of the approaching kingdom. But Christian baptism implied the joining of a community. This, indeed, was one of the essential elements in its meaning—that the man who had once submitted to it was incorporated henceforth in the Ecclesia.

In the light of the conclusions we have already reached, it is not difficult to see how baptism acquired this peculiar value. The work of Jesus, as conceived by his disciples, had been that of forming a community, a new Israel, in which the promises of God would receive their fulfilment. This idea of the redeemed community was primary in early Christian thought. The heirs of the kingdom were not a multitude of separate individuals who had declared their faith in Christ, but were bound together as a single organism possessed of a common life. In order to participate in the life, it was necessary to be a member of the body. In the new Israel, as in the old, the individual was nothing apart from the whole community, which was the object of God's choice. We can understand, therefore, how a special significance connected itself with baptism. It was an act of preparation for the kingdom, and was accompanied by a confession of Jesus, through whom the kingdom was to come; but in this same act the convert was assimilated to the church.

In virtue of the faith he had professed he was held to have secured his place in that new community to which the kingdom had been promised. Here, probably, we are to discover the true reason why the confession required at baptism took the particular form of Κύριος Ἰησοῦς. The title "Lord," as we have seen already, was used within the church to express that attitude in which his own people stood to Jesus. As distinguished from the abstract title of Messiah, it carried with it the acknowledgment of his sovereign right, and could only be assigned to him by that community in which he reigned. To confess him as "Lord," therefore, implied that you took your place in his community. You joined in the allegiance which was rendered him by his people and claimed your right in those blessings which he bestowed upon them. We have no ground for supposing that in the primitive age a mystical value was attributed to baptism. It was the token of incorporation into the church because it stood for repentance and for the open confession of a living faith in Jesus. We are not even to think of it as a Christian counterpart to the seal of circumcision, although at least one reference in Paul would seem to indicate that thought soon began to tend in this direction.* But the primitive custom of admitting to the church by baptism easily lent itself to a further development. The

* Col. 2 : 11 *f.*

rite whereby a man entered the new community was construed, under the influence of heathen ideas, as a rite of initiation into the mysteries of a new life.

In the later New Testament period baptism is connected above all with the work of the Spirit. It is assumed that in the moment of baptism the higher power takes possession of a man's nature, effecting in him a change so radical that it may be described as a new birth. To the fourth evangelist "water and the Spirit" are two elements that work together—the Spirit communicating itself, in a manner that cannot be traced or defined, through the material act of baptism. Not a few modern writers have attributed a similar doctrine to Paul and have even given it a cardinal place in his theology. The evidence they adduce is far from convincing, but it may at least be admitted that in more than one striking passage Paul brings the work of the Spirit into close relation to baptism.* How far did it belong to the primitive conception of the rite that, by means of it or simultaneously with it, the gift of the Spirit was imparted?

The question is difficult to answer; for when our records were composed the connection of the Spirit with baptism had become a settled belief in the church. Luke assumes that the difference

* I Cor. 6 : 11; 12 : 13.

between the earlier and the later baptism consists in this: that John baptised with water only, while the Christian baptism was accompanied with the Spirit.* To Peter's summons at Pentecost, "Repent and be baptised every one of you," he adds, as a matter of course, "and ye shall receive the Holy Spirit." † Luke's own position is so clear that the more significance must be attached to certain passages in which baptism and the gift of the Spirit appear as two separate experiences. In the story of Cornelius we are told how the Spirit descended on the believing gentiles, and Peter accepts this as a sign from God that baptism may now be administered.‡ Elsewhere the Spirit is bestowed after baptism, either as a direct gift from heaven or by the symbolic action of the laying on of hands.§ Even in passages where he assumes the coincidence of baptism with the gift of the Spirit, Luke cannot wholly conceal the traces of a prior tradition. The disciples of John at Ephesus are baptised by Paul for the express reason that they may receive the heavenly gift of which they have hitherto been completely ignorant. But they only receive it after the rite has been performed, when Paul has laid his hands upon them.‖ Their baptism, apparently, had conferred on them not the gift it-

* Acts 1 : 5; 11 : 15–18; 19 : 1–7.
† Acts. 2 : 38.
‡ Acts 10 : 44 *ff.*
§ Acts 8 : 16, 17.
‖ Acts 19 : 1–7.

self but some new capability whereby they could respond to it.

It would appear, therefore, that in the earlier belief, of which we have reminiscences in the book of Acts, there was no intrinsic connection between baptism and the imparting of the Spirit. Even if no such direct evidence had been preserved to us, we might have inferred that the two experiences were originally separate. Baptism, in spite of the important place which it always occupied, was by its nature a ritual act, formal and deliberate. The gift of the Spirit was something that came spontaneously, and no mode or time could be prescribed for its manifestation. In the first age, when the mood of enthusiasm was still fresh and real, the distinction between the formal rite and the sudden inrush of the Spirit must have been so evident that no one could think of identifying them. The doctrine that they took place together is obviously the product of a later time, when the Spirit had partly lost its former character and was conceived of as a silent power operating constantly in the Christian life.

But, although the later view of the significance of baptism must be regarded as foreign to primitive Christian thought, we can see how it developed itself out of conditions that were present from the first. Something must be allowed, on the one hand, to psychological causes. Baptism was a ritual act and had no necessary connection

with the manifestations of the Spirit. Yet it marked for the convert the most sacred moment of his life, when he definitely broke with the past and surrendered himself to Jesus as his Lord. On this occasion of all others he would be overpowered by religious emotion. In many cases it would find utterance in those strange outcries which were supposed to witness to the Spirit. Even if phenomena of this kind were absent, the moment would be remembered as one of vision and exaltation. A Christian who reflected on his experience and tried to determine when he had first been conscious of the Spirit might naturally conclude that it had come upon him in his baptism. This belief would suggest itself the more readily if the story of the baptism of Jesus, as recorded in our Gospels, formed part of the primitive tradition. If the details of the story were added later, we may explain them from a reading back into the life of Jesus of an experience which was familiar to his disciples. The moment of baptism was one of consecration when they could feel as if the heavens had opened and the Spirit were descending on them. But, apart from these psychological reasons, we can account for the new significance which gradually attached itself to baptism and displaced the earlier conceptions. By the confession of Jesus in baptism the convert passed over into the church. He was a member henceforth of that new community on which the

Spirit had been bestowed, and as such he participated in the common life. His baptism in itself might be a formal rite, unaccompanied by any working of the higher power; but, in so far as he was now incorporated within the church, he was endowed with the Spirit. At any time it might openly declare its presence; but even if these manifestations were lacking he could feel that he possessed it, since he was one with the spiritual community. Thus the later doctrine of baptism, alien as it was to the original meaning of the ordinance, may be said to have brought to a focus those primitive ideas which have met us constantly in the course of our inquiry. The church, as the community of the kingdom, was endued with the Spirit, which was to be poured out in the new age. This power was bestowed not on the individuals in whom it might specially reveal itself but on the church as an organic whole; all members of the body had their share in the life of the body. It followed that the gift of the Spirit was imparted to each believer from the moment of his entrance into the church. The baptism with water was at the same time a baptism with the Spirit. There was no thought of this identification in the minds of the earlier Apostles, but it was logically involved in their conception of the church.

LECTURE VIII

THE LORD'S SUPPER

THE rite of baptism, although it expressed ideas which could find their sanction in the teaching of Jesus, was not directly instituted by him. It marked a reversion from his own practice to that of his predecessor; and, in spite of the cardinal place which it soon occupied, it was recognised, even by Paul, as something accessory to the gospel. But in the Lord's Supper the church claimed to possess an ordinance which Jesus himself had bequeathed to it at the supreme moment of his life. From the beginning this ordinance was the chief bond of union in the Christian brotherhood and the central act of its worship. What was the significance originally attached to the Lord's Supper? This question, more, perhaps, than any other, is crucial for our whole inquiry into the character and beliefs of the early church.

Here, however, to an even greater extent than in the case of baptism, we have to reckon with a confusion due to the intermingling of earlier and later ideas. The Supper was in itself a richer

and more suggestive rite than baptism, and the circumstances of its origin had lent it a peculiar consecration. As time went on it gathered around it new meanings, derived from the deepening thought and experience of the church, and these interpretations cannot be separated with any certainty from the original conceptions to which, in many cases, they may have been nearly allied. Moreover, the doctrine of the Supper yielded itself in an almost unique fashion to modification by alien influences. The sacred meal was a well-marked feature in all the contemporary religions—so much so that Paul, in the very effort to differentiate the Supper from the kindred observances of heathenism, is led unconsciously to think of them in similar terms (I Cor. 10 : 21). There can be little doubt that in the process of the gentile mission the conception of the Supper was influenced in several directions by mystical ideas native to the heathen cults, and these ideas entered so deeply into its substance that we find it almost impossible to detach them. At the same time there is a danger, to which modern criticism has too readily succumbed, of unduly narrowing the original import of the Supper by an exclusive emphasis on the later influences. The possibility has always to be borne in mind that their action, for the most part, was subsidiary. Instead of creating a new significance for the rite they may only have accen-

tuated and fostered the ideas which were vaguely connected with it from the first.

It is apparent, from the evidence of the New Testament itself, that the doctrine of the Supper underwent profound changes in the course of the first century. The fourth evangelist conceives of the ordinance in a different manner from Paul, and the interpretation of Paul can hardly have corresponded, in all points, with that of the primitive community. Some ground is thus afforded for the radical doubt which has been raised more than once in modern criticism. It has been maintained that the whole tradition of the founding of the ordinance by Jesus is open to question, and may best be explained as a myth that grew up around a given practice. Christianity, under the influence of contemporary religious custom, adopted the rite of the sacred meal; and this was gradually invested, as in other cults, with an explanatory legend. The common meal was brought into relation with the history of Jesus. Its observance was traced to an injunction given by him that his saving death should in this manner be commemorated by all succeeding time. The theory breaks down, however, when we examine the actual character of the supposed myth. If it had been freely invented to account for a perplexing religious custom, it would surely have embodied some attempt to

throw light upon its meaning. As it is, the narratives of the Supper that have come down to us are all fragmentary and obscure. So far from explaining the rite as it was practised in the church, they cannot be reconciled with it except in a partial and general way. The conclusion is forced on us that we have not to do with a symbolic legend, framed to account for an observance, but with a historical fact to which the observance has difficulty in adjusting itself. Apart from these larger considerations, the evidence for the historical character of the Last Supper is such as can hardly admit of serious question. (*a*) The facts are recorded by Paul after an interval of little more than twenty years, and he claims to be merely transmitting an accepted tradition. (*b*) The narrative of Paul is one of several which have been preserved to us, all of them repeating the same general features although with differences that prove them to be independent. From their divergences we can infer that they reflect the practice of Christian communities widely removed from each other; while it is manifest, in view of the substantial agreement, that these communities were all at one as to the origin of the rite. If the incident is legendary, the legend must have been invented in the very earliest days of the church—at a time, that is, when the facts were so vividly remembered that invention was impossible. (*c*) When we consider the admitted

circumstances of Jesus' death, his institution of the Supper has an a priori possibility. He died in the Passover week, when the thought of the sacred meal was uppermost in the minds of all men. Leaving aside for the present the difficult question as to the precise date of the Last Supper, the season was one in which it was natural that Jesus should think of the Passover meal and avail himself of its symbolism in his farewell meeting with his disciples. It may be granted that the ritual feasts of the contemporary cults left their mark on the later development of the doctrine of the Supper; but a sober criticism cannot venture to explain the Christian ordinance entirely from these, in face of the obvious parallel afforded by the Jewish rite of the Passover.

We may assume, then, without misgiving, that the observance of the Supper was directly related to the example of Jesus himself. His disciples remembered that on the last occasion when they supped with him he had made use of the bread and wine which lay before him in order to express some thought that was in his mind. When the Christian brotherhood was formed at Jerusalem the custom established itself, apparently from the beginning, of re-enacting this farewell Supper of Jesus. Unfortunately, we are told nothing in detail as to the nature of the primitive observance or the ideas connected with it. The

information given us in the book of Acts is all comprised in two incidental references, both of them occurring in the passage which describes the growth of the church after the day of Pentecost. (*a*) "And they continued stedfastly in the teaching of the Apostles and the fellowship—in the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2 : 42). (*b*) "And day by day, continuing stedfastly in the Temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart" (Acts 2 : 46). Another translation of the former passage is grammatically possible: "they persisted in the teaching of the Apostles, and in the fellowship by means of the breaking of bread, and in the prayers." This rendering has been adopted by some scholars, who find in it at least a foothold for a special theory of the primitive conception of the Supper. But there is no valid reason for substituting this awkward construction for the plain and natural one. The author contemplates not three but four characteristic elements in the life of the infant church, and he arranges them in two pairs: on the one hand, acceptance of the Christian teaching and association in a common life; on the other hand, observance of the supper and meeting together for prayer.

From these two notices in Acts, brief and meagre as they are, we can draw several important inferences. (1) The observance which in the

later Pauline communities bore the name of "the Lord's Supper" was originally known as "the breaking of bread." That this phrase applies not to an ordinary meal but to the specific rite of the Supper is rendered certain by Luke's usage elsewhere; for example, in the story of the walk to Emmaus, where the Lord reveals himself to the two disciples by his "breaking of bread." * It is a forcing of language to conclude, as some have done, that the distribution of the cup had no place in the primitive ritual; for the complete ordinance may well have been connoted by a name that applied strictly to one part of it. Yet we may fairly assume that the breaking of bread was recognised as the chief part of the ordinance, and this assumption is borne out by other evidences in the New Testament. In the Emmaus story already mentioned it is by the definite act of breaking the bread that Jesus makes himself known. The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand is meant, we can hardly doubt, to bear that reference to the Supper which is explicitly found in it by the fourth evangelist; and it consists in the giving of bread. This symbolic miracle points us, likewise, to the true significance of the *breaking* of the bread. Paul, in his desire to correlate the Supper with his own theological ideas, seems to regard the breaking as in some way typical of the destruction of Christ's body.

* *Cf.* also Acts 20 : 7–12.

But this interpretation is arbitrary and is only hinted at by Paul himself. The true emphasis falls on the distribution of the bread, which is broken into portions that all alike may partake of it.

(2) The supper was observed daily, and in private houses; for this is apparently the meaning of the somewhat ambiguous phrase κατ' οἶκον (Acts 2 : 46). Even in the earliest days the number of the believers was too large to admit of a meal in which all could participate together; and Luke tells us, therefore, that, while a general gathering took place each day in the precincts of the temple, the brethren separated into groups and adjourned to different houses for the purpose of the Supper. From the double statement that it was held daily and in a semi-private fashion, we can infer that it was a social meal as well as a religious ordinance. At a later period we hear of two distinct meals—the agape, or feast of Christian fellowship, and the eucharist. These two meals seem at first to have been linked together and afterward to have been disjoined. Their changing relation to each other forms a difficult problem in early church history which does not here concern us. For the apostolic age seems to have recognised only one meal, which underwent division at a subsequent time when it was felt desirable to mark the solemn character of the ritual observance by separating it from the

meal as a whole. In the classic passage of the eleventh chapter of I Corinthians Paul describes a Lord's Supper which is at the same time a meal for social fellowship. His language would seem to suggest that the distribution of the bread took place at the beginning of the meal and the drinking of the cup at a later stage, "after they had supped." In any case, he thinks of the observance proper as consecrating the whole meal, of which it forms an integral part. The notices in Acts reflect a similar usage, for they make no distinction between the daily meal and the "breaking of bread" which accompanied it. How long the custom continued of celebrating the Lord's Supper as part of the ordinary meal we have no means of determining. In the Pauline communities, although the meal still retained its social character, the daily observance had already given place to a weekly one. But we have to remember that the mood of the church in the initial days was one of glowing enthusiasm inspired by the momentary expectation of the return of Christ. Every meal at which the believers held fellowship with one another seemed to mark the eve of the great fulfilment, and no need was felt to separate the ordinary eating and drinking from the sanctities of the Lord's Supper.

(3) A further aspect of the observance, as contemplated in these passages of Acts, has rightly been emphasised by modern scholars. "Breaking

bread in the house-gatherings, they ate," we are told, "with gladness" (Acts 2 : 46). The meal, apparently, was the occasion of joyous intercourse, not of such mournful reminiscence as might have seemed more fitting in a commemoration of the Lord's death. That the Supper continued to bear this character of gladness may be gathered from Paul's rebuke of the manner of its observance at Corinth. It had there degenerated into a mere festive banquet in which its sacred import was almost entirely forgotten. The influence of the pagan feasts may, no doubt, have contributed to this perversion of the meal in the Greek city, but in the main we may see in it the exaggeration of a primitive custom. A spirit of joyful fellowship had been associated with the Supper from the earliest days. Conclusions of a far-reaching nature have been deduced from this feature of the observance. It has been maintained that the Supper had originally no specific reference to the death of Christ and that this significance was imported into it at a later time by Paul.* But, while it is legitimate to argue that a feast of gladness cannot have been a mere commemoration of the great tragedy, we cannot infer that it was dissociated from it altogether. Jesus himself, according to the Gospel record, foresaw in his death the necessary transition to the victory of his cause, and by means of the Supper pointed his dis-

* This is the view taken by Heitmüller, Spitta, Réville, etc.

ciples beyond the apparent ruin to the triumph. As they recalled the circumstances in which it had been instituted they may well have connected it with the hope that sustained Jesus in the face of death rather than with the death itself. This was the more natural as the death had now issued in the victorious resurrection which had given a new meaning to the hope. Any other mood than that of rejoicing must have appeared false to the spirit of the ordinance as it had been conceived by Jesus himself.

These, then, are the chief aspects of the Supper which are brought to our knowledge by the fragmentary statements in Acts, but it is evident that they have little light to throw on the central question as to the meaning attached to the rite by the first disciples. In order to find some answer to this question it will be necessary to bring the scanty data of Acts into relation with the narratives of the institution of the Supper and with the knowledge we have gained concerning the character and aims of the new community.

The institution of the Supper is described by all three Synoptic writers as well as by Paul in the familiar passage of I Corinthians, and the several accounts all vary in important respects from one another. These differences seem to have arisen not so much from any dissension regarding the facts as from the interpretations placed upon

them in various circles. Since the ordinance consisted of symbolic actions, the meaning of which was far from self-evident, it was customary to add words of elucidation, and these in the course of time became interwoven with the traditional formulæ. A comparison of our extant accounts sufficiently illustrates this process. Where Mark simply states the fact "they all drank of it," Matthew attributes to Jesus himself the command: "Drink ye all of it." To the formula concerning the blood of the covenant he adds the explanatory clause "for the remission of sins." The words in Paul's account, "Do this in remembrance of me," are unknown to Mark and Matthew, and are, no doubt, introduced by Paul himself to enforce the intention of Jesus that the rite should be repeated. How easily such additions might slip in we can see from the close of Paul's narrative, where it is uncertain whether Paul is appending a comment of his own or continuing the words of Jesus. The accretions which have thus overlaid the fundamental ritual of the Supper would probably be recognised at first in their true character, but the task of disengaging them is now one of extreme difficulty. It would be rash to assume, with some modern critics, that the rite as enacted by Jesus was practically unaccompanied by any words descriptive of its purpose, but the formulæ he employed must have been of the simplest and briefest. There could have been no room for divergent ex-

planations if the authentic words had themselves been fully adequate.

Our accounts differ, moreover, not only as to the details of the institution but as to its whole setting and occasion. Did it coincide with the Passover meal or was it a new rite founded independently of the Passover? It is well known that in the Fourth Gospel the death of Christ is assigned to the day preceding the feast of Passover, so that his last Supper with his disciples was separated by a day from the Passover meal. By itself the evidence of the Fourth Gospel is precarious, and is especially so on a point like this where the evangelist was tempted to indulge in his favourite symbolism by making the death of Jesus contemporaneous with the slaying of the paschal lamb. But the Johannine date is supported by the inherent probabilities of the case. The desire of the authorities, as Mark himself testifies, was to secure the removal of Jesus on a day that would not clash with the solemnities of the Passover feast, and there is no evidence that they were hindered in the execution of their plan. Indeed, a close examination of Mark's own narrative seems to reveal a certain awkwardness and inconsistency, as if some earlier tradition of a supper previous to the Passover had been displaced by the later one. It has to be recognised that if John was tempted to bring the death of Jesus into relation with the slaying of the lamb

the Synoptic writers may likewise have been influenced by a theological motive. Luke, more particularly, does not conceal his anxiety that the Supper should be regarded as the meal in which the Passover found its true fulfilment. The Jewish feast, with all that it recalled and signified, is now to be superseded by the real Passover.

The problem does not admit of any definite solution, and perhaps its bearings on the import of the Supper are not so vital as many writers have assumed. It cannot be doubted that if the Supper did not actually coincide with the Passover meal it yet took place at the Passover season when men's minds were occupied with the thought of the sacred ordinance. To Jesus, who had eagerly desired to eat this Passover with his disciples before he suffered, the coming feast must have appealed the more solemnly and impressively since he knew that he would not share it. The ideas associated with it, the practice and symbolism of the cherished observance, would naturally determine his action as he presided at the Supper. On the other hand, even if we could prove that the new rite sprang directly out of the Passover meal, it would have to be recognised as something new. Jesus did not provide a substitute for the Jewish feast. As a matter of fact, the disciples, until after the days of Paul, continued to hold the Passover along with their

countrymen—betraying no consciousness that the daily or weekly Supper had taken its place. The Supper must be regarded as an entirely new rite, and any attempt to explain it as a replica or a modification of the older feast can only confuse us as to its purpose. None the less, it originated in close connection with the Passover meal and has so far to be interpreted in the light of Passover ideas. The conflict of evidence concerning the true date of the Last Supper serves to impress on us these two facts, and they need equally to be borne in mind.

The four New Testament accounts of the institution of the Supper fall, broadly speaking, into two groups—Matthew and Mark as against Paul and Luke. Matthew's divergences from Mark are all of the nature of explanatory additions which have little value in helping us back toward a more original or even an alternative version. In the case of Luke and Paul, however, we are confronted with a problem the full significance of which has only been appreciated in recent years. Half of Luke's account (Luke 22 : 19*b*–20) is an almost exact reproduction of the parallel passage in I Corinthians; the other half is independent alike of the Pauline and the Marcan versions. It is important to observe that this section of Luke's narrative forms by itself a complete account of the Supper. "And he received a cup, and when

he had given thanks he said, Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he brake it and gave to them saying, This is my body." The verses which follow would require us to suppose that the cup was reduplicated as at the Passover meal. In the view of many critics,* the short text of Luke is the original one, and has been supplemented from I Corinthians by some scribe who was anxious to bring it into conformity with the now established usage. The fact that the supplementary verses are wanting in manuscripts of the Western type lends a considerable support to this theory. Yet it must not be accepted too hastily, for not only is the manuscript evidence for the longer version exceedingly strong, but the introduction of the two cups would be quite in keeping with Luke's obvious desire to assimilate the Supper to the Passover meal. It seems difficult to deny, however, that there is a fusion of two separate accounts, and whether it is due to Luke or to some later editor is a matter of minor importance. In the short text of Luke we have preserved to us a third independent tradition, which has to be considered along with those recorded by Paul and Mark; but we cannot accept without reserve the widely prevalent view that it is the oldest of the

* *E. g.*, Heitmüller, Wellhausen, J. Weiss.

three traditions. In a matter affecting the ritual of the chief act of Christian worship, Luke's preference would be given not necessarily to the oldest and best-authenticated version, but to that which supported the usage of his own church.

From a comparison of the various narratives three facts appear to stand out concerning which the tradition was unanimous: (1) that Jesus distributed bread and wine to his disciples; (2) that in dispensing the bread he spoke the words, "This is my body"; (3) that in connection with the cup he declared that he would next drink it with his disciples at the Messianic banquet in the kingdom of God. As regards this last point, it is true that the words—in themselves so characteristic of the language of Jesus—are wanting in the narrative of Paul, but he adds a clause which suggests them in a sort of paraphrase: "Ye do show the Lord's death till he come."

The chief difficulties gather around the mysterious words, "This is my body,"—words which in all the accounts are placed at the centre, as indicating the true purpose of the Supper. From the time of the Fourth Gospel onward it has been customary to interpret them in the terms of a mystical theology, and controversialists have read into them all manner of impossible meanings in order to force them into the service of some particular dogma. Modern criticism holds aloof from these prepossessions and tries to understand the words

simply in their context and in their relation to the aims and conceptions of Jesus. In recent years the interpretation of the words, as of the Supper generally, has been largely guided by the suggestion contained in a passage of Paul: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one loaf, one body; for we are all partakers of that one loaf" (I Cor. 10 : 16, 17). Paul here illustrates the unity of the Christian church from the symbolism of the Supper. As one loaf is broken up and divided among the communicants, so all have part in one common life. In their diversity they yet constitute the one body of Christ, by fellowship with whom they are brought into union. A similar idea seems to find expression in the eucharistic prayer of the "Didache," which in all likelihood is a fragment of a traditional liturgy: "As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, and being gathered together became one, so may thy church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy Kingdom." On the ground of these evidences it is contended that the Supper was originally a feast of brotherhood and that Jesus had himself instituted it for this purpose. At his farewell meeting with his disciples he gave a consecration to that fellowship around a common table which had marked them as brethren.

He impressed upon them that after his death they were to remain united, conscious that they were bound together in his cause and that he himself was still, in some manner, present with them. In this sense, it is argued, the enigmatical words of the formula are to be explained. Jesus bade his disciples think of the bread as the pledge and the symbol of his own presence. Partaking of it, they were to feel that they were still his comrades and that their loyalty to the one Master was the bond that united them.

This explanation of the rite and its accompanying words has commended itself to many scholars, but on the face of it appears strained and unnatural. No ingenuity can fairly construe the words, "This is my body," as a command to observe the Supper as a feast of brotherhood. Moreover, the passages which are urged in proof of the theory are found, on closer examination, to have little bearing on it. Paul's reference to the "one loaf" as typical of the unity of all Christians is dependent on his peculiar doctrine that the church is the body of Christ. By a turn of fanciful imagery he finds this doctrine implied in the ritual of the Supper, but he does not intend his words to be taken literally. When, in the following chapter, he comes to speak directly of the significance of the bread, he connects it solely with the death of Christ. As for the prayer in the "Didache," it has only a superficial correspondence with Paul's

conception of "one loaf, one body." The idea expressed in it is a purely eschatological one—the bread compounded of scattered grains of corn symbolising the reunion of believers in the coming kingdom of God. It is, indeed, certain that the Supper, from the very outset, was a bond of Christian brotherhood; this has ever been one of its most cherished functions in the worship of the church. But this does not imply that Jesus instituted it wholly or mainly for such a purpose. We may conjecture, rather, that its meaning as a bond of union was rooted in some deeper meaning which was present in the mind of Jesus and which was fully recognised by his first disciples.

What, then, was the primary import of the Supper, the import which is somewhere hidden in the central words: "This is my body"? In order to discover some answer to this question there are several considerations that must be borne in mind. (1) Jesus was consciously on the verge of his death, and the thought of it at that moment must have coloured all his other thoughts. His action at the Last Supper must be interpreted in the closest relation to his death. (2) The death, as he conceived it, was something more than a sad separation from his companions. He believed that it was divinely ordained and that by means of it, in some way, the kingdom was to be brought nearer. A thought of this kind is plainly involved in his words describing the Supper

as a prelude to the Messianic banquet. (3) The Supper, whether it coincided with the Passover meal or not, was affected by the thoughts and memories that clustered around the Passover. At this season his countrymen were observing their great national festival. They were being reminded anew not only that they were brethren but that they were united in a high calling as the chosen people of God.

When these circumstances of the Supper are taken together we seem to be guided at least to a probable explanation of its purpose and meaning. Jesus was about to surrender his life in the conviction that thus, according to the divine plan, he would bring in the kingdom. He was to die as "a ransom for many," inaugurating, by his own sacrifice, a new and happier order into which many would enter. And by his action at the Supper he formally bestowed on each one of his disciples a portion in the approaching kingdom. The sacrifice he was about to make was his own personal act, but he identified them with it so that they might claim their share in the fulfilment that would ensue. Partaking in this ordinance, they were adopted as heirs of the kingdom. As the Passover meal was the token of membership in the commonwealth of Israel, so the participation in this Supper was to seal the members of the new community which would come into being through his death.

By means of this interpretation we can discover in the words, "This is my body," a real and intelligible meaning—a meaning, too, that fits in with the historical circumstances and with the teaching of Jesus as a whole. He had learned, if we may trust the evidence of our Gospels, to contemplate his death in the light of ideas suggested by the prophecy of the suffering servant. His body given up to death was to be accepted as the "ransom" which would avail for many. He sought to declare to his disciples that they would have their part in the "ransom," that they were represented in his individual act; and this he did by a symbolism that suggested itself at the moment. The bread that lay before him on the table was something that could be divided, distributed, assimilated; so was it with his body offered in sacrifice. The act was his own act, but he granted to his disciples that they should participate in it and so obtain their share in his victory.

The words, "This is my body," have their counterpart, according to our records, in another saying, spoken at the distribution of the cup. Mark and Paul agree, although with minor differences, in assigning to Jesus the words concerning a "new covenant," ratified in his blood, of which the wine was a symbol. Before we consider the more radical problem affecting this part of the Supper narratives it may be well to de-

termine how the words have to be understood. What is the precise meaning of the term διαθήκη, so important for its bearing not only on the doctrine of the Supper but on the whole thought of primitive Christianity?

In the ordinary Greek of the first century διαθήκη had undoubtedly the well-understood meaning of a "will," and in recent years the attempt has been made to establish this as the normal New Testament usage.* The Supper would thus become Jesus' bequest to his disciples —the testament he delivers to them immediately before his death. It is evident, however, that the words attributed to him are an echo of those of Moses, "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you," † and here the supposed meaning is excluded. Moreover, it is incompatible with the idea of a *new* covenant, which is emphasised by Paul although omitted by Mark. Even less adequate is another interpretation put forward to support the theory that the Supper was in its essence a feast of brotherhood.‡ The word διαθήκη, it is argued, must be taken in its sense of an "alliance," and implies nothing more than that Jesus ordained a new bond to unite his followers. On linguistic if on no other

* *Cf.* Deissmann, "Paulus," 102; Dibelius, "Das Abendmahl."

† Ex. 24 : 8.

‡ This view is advocated by Réville, "Les Origines de l'Eucharistie."

grounds this meaning is excluded. The sort of "alliance" which is denoted by the term διαθήκη is a formal convention between two parties, not the uniting of a group of men in a bond of comradeship. In view of the religious tradition, which in this case must have been decisive, we have little choice but to take διαθήκη in its Old Testament sense of a "covenant," and the real difficulty consists in the exact definition of the Old Testament term. Originally, no doubt, its religious, like its ordinary, meaning was that of an agreement between two parties as to their reciprocal obligations, but in the later Old Testament period this idea of contract passes out of sight. God's authority is absolute—he does not treat with men upon conditions but simply imposes his sovereign will. Thus the word comes to signify a declaration on the part of God whereby, in accordance with his gracious purpose, men are placed in a certain relation to himself.* This meaning plainly underlies the classical passage in Jeremiah,† to which the conception of a "new covenant" must ultimately be traced. As he looks forward to the promised consummation, the prophet declares that Israel will at last become God's people in very truth. Formerly they had been unfaithful to the vocation he had marked

* An able discussion leading to this result will be found in Behm, "Diatheke."

† Jer. 31 : 31 *ff.*

out for them, but in the days to come he will write his laws upon their hearts. "They shall be my people, and I will be their God." In our accounts of the Supper Jesus reverts to this prophetic utterance, which presents in its loftiest form the Old Testament expectation of the kingdom. He affirms that hereafter God will bring men into a new relation to him, choosing for himself a people that will realise the true destiny of Israel. And as the ancient covenant was ratified with a sacrifice, the blood of which was sprinkled on the people, so Jesus offered the cup to his disciples as "the new covenant in my blood."

It cannot be denied, however, that this part of the Supper tradition is beset with grave difficulties, so much so that we can hardly accept it without some misgiving. (1) The whole reference to the blood of the covenant is omitted in the short text of Luke. (2) In the Marcan version, which is repeated by Matthew, the words "of the covenant" are introduced awkwardly and have all the appearance of a later addition (*τοῦτο ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπέρ πολλῶν*). (3) If the Mosaic precedent was in Jesus' mind—and this is clearly suggested by the formula—it is difficult to explain the drinking of the cup; we should rather have expected a symbolic act of sprinkling. (4) Jesus' reference to his blood is obviously meant to be parallel to the

previous reference to his "body." But if this parallel had been intended by him he would not have said, "This is my body," for σῶμα is a comprehensive term denoting the whole personality, but: "This is my flesh." (5) It is one of the most certain data of the narrative that in connection with the cup he spoke of the time when he would drink the wine new in the kingdom of God. If we accept the words concerning the blood of the covenant we must suppose that he accompanied the distribution of the cup with two separate sayings; and not only so, but that he passed over to a wholly different sphere of thought and imagery. When due weight is allowed to all these difficulties we are compelled to feel that in the incident of the cup the authentic tradition has been overlaid by subsequent reflection. The church was anxious to equate its solemn ordinance with that which had ushered in the history of Israel. Likewise a sacrificial doctrine of the death of Christ had gradually developed itself and reacted on the theory of the Supper. It would relieve the narrative of many perplexities if we supposed that Jesus gave the cup simply by way of anticipation of the Messianic feast. The two parts of his action at the Supper would then connect with one another in a natural sequence. By the distribution of the bread he adopted his disciples into the new community that would be realised through his death. Then he offered them the cup as a pledge

of their reunion with him as a redeemed people in the kingdom of God.

Nevertheless, it is significant that already in the days of Paul the Supper had become associated with the idea of the New Covenant. The words of the formula may be unhistorical, but they afford us an all-important clew to the meaning attached to the Supper by that primitive church which stood in immediate relation to Jesus. In language borrowed from the Old Testament the church expressed what it believed to be his essential purpose in the institution of the rite. He was aware that by his death fulfilment would be given to the promise of the kingdom. God would form for himself a new community, a true Israel, which would know his will and in which his purposes would at last be realised. As Moses by the sprinkling of blood had consecrated Israel as God's people, so the disciples were now admitted to their supreme privilege as children of the kingdom. The conception of the New Covenant was henceforth normative in Christianity. It was construed, in the process of time, by means of theological categories which were alien to the thought of Jesus, but essentially it was in harmony with his own teaching. The church embodied it in the ritual of the Supper because it expressed more clearly than any other conception the ultimate meaning of the rite.

We find, then, as we examine the Supper narra-

tives, that almost at every step we are brought face to face with insoluble problems; yet amidst all the confusion certain broad results seem to emerge. Jesus had partaken, with his disciples, of what he knew to be their last meal together, and the occasion was doubly sacred because the season was that of Passover. Possessed with the conviction that through his approaching death the kingdom would break in, he desired to give a pledge to his followers that they would share with him in his victory. By an impressive symbolism, suggested by the meal, he identified them with his act of sacrifice, thereby securing to them their place in the future community of God's people. At a later time this action of Jesus was rightly interpreted in terms of the covenant idea. Jeremiah had foretold a day when God would make a new covenant with Israel—in other words, would establish a new and higher relation between himself and his people. This promise had now reached fulfilment. The disciples of Jesus, adopted by him as participants in his death, had entered on their higher vocation as the chosen people of God.

As we now return from this investigation of the origin of the Supper to the place which it occupied in the primitive church, an important question falls to be considered. Did Jesus institute the rite with the deliberate purpose that it should be repeated from time to time? Such an intention

is made explicit in the Pauline formula, reproduced in the longer text of Luke: "Do this in remembrance of me." These words, however, are not found in the other narratives, and the omission cannot be accidental. The observance had so rooted itself in the custom of the church that if Jesus had left an express command for its repetition the fact would have been emphatically recorded. We can only regard the formula given by Paul as a later addition, supplying a want which may have caused misgivings. It is, indeed, possible that even if Jesus did not enjoin the repetition he made it clear from his mode of observing the rite that he meant it to remain as a constant ordinance. But here we must bear in mind that he does not seem to have contemplated the formation of a church with stated rites and institutions. In the very act of dispensing the Supper he declared his belief that the consummation was near and that he would presently drink the wine new in the kingdom of God. Thus we have no ground for assuming that he meant the ordinance to be repeated. On the contrary, we are left with the impression of an act performed once for all at a culminating moment by way of a farewell pledge.

How, then, are we to account for the undoubted fact that the disciples from the first adopted the Supper as their characteristic rite and daily repeated it? The explanation must be sought not

in some express commandment they had received from Jesus but in the significance which the rite possessed for them. They believed—if our interpretation has been correct—that by means of the Supper Jesus had confirmed them in their privilege as heirs of the kingdom. He had called them into a new covenant whereby they were acknowledged as the true Israel of God. On its claim to be the new community, destined to inherit the coming age, the whole life of the church was founded, and we cannot wonder that care was taken to perpetuate the ordinance which indorsed that claim. Day by day the believers re-enacted the Supper as it had been observed by Jesus. In this manner they recalled the assurance he had given them and kept alive in their hearts the consciousness of their great vocation. Each meeting of the church was signalised by the repetition of the Supper, for by this act it recited, as it were, the grand charter which had constituted it the church.

In one sense, indeed, there was something more than a mere repetition of the rite that had been celebrated by Jesus. That first observance of the Supper had still involved an element of anticipation. The disciples were admitted to a privilege on which they could not fully enter until the death, whereby it would be secured to them, had been accomplished. But now the condition was fulfilled and Jesus had taken his place as Lord. His people could think of themselves as in very

truth the elect community in which the powers of the new age were already operative. We can understand, therefore, the peculiar import which attached to the Supper from the beginning and which rendered it the natural focus of mystical feeling and speculation. At this ordinance the believers were withdrawn from the world and realised in their fellowship with one another that they were the children of the kingdom and had part in the new life. They not only anticipated the reunion with Christ at the Messianic banquet, but knew it in some measure as a present reality.

When we thus apprehend the meaning of the Supper the indications given us in the book of Acts assume a fresh value and explain themselves more fully. The rite was celebrated with gladness, for it brought with it in some sense a fruition of that hope on which the Christian life was concentrated. Jesus had departed into the unseen that he might be Lord in the promised kingdom, and while they partook of his Supper his people could feel that they were united with him and shared his victory. Again, although it was combined with the social meal, the Supper was an act of worship and is mentioned by the writer of Acts along with the prayers. For the disciples it was the pledge of that new relation in which they now stood to God. Through Christ they had become his elect people, and their worship henceforth was all pervaded by this sense of a closer

communion with God. Once more, it was the seal and declaration of Christian brotherhood. By means of the Supper the disciples were not only united in comradeship round the memory of a beloved Master but were reminded, to use the words of Paul, that they formed one body. Jesus had separated them from the world as the community of the kingdom. The bread that was broken among them was symbolical of the one life, the one higher calling, of which they had all alike become partakers.

In the primitive observance, therefore, the way was already prepared for that estimate of the Supper which found expression in the later doctrine. It was inevitable that in process of reflection and under the many alien influences that acted on Christianity the meaning of the rite should be subjected to new interpretations. Apocalyptic ideas were explained in the terms of Hellenistic mysticism. Beliefs that were originally simple and concrete were brought into ever closer relation to a speculative theology. But the point of departure for all the later development was the primitive conception of the "new covenant," whereby the people of Christ received their inheritance in that kingdom which was to be realised through his death. On this conception the church was founded, and it was bequeathed to the first disciples by Jesus himself.

LECTURE IX

STEPHEN

The advent of Stephen, followed almost immediately by his death, marks the first great turning-point in the history of the church. It hastened the separation of the new religion from Judaism. It led to the dispersion of the primitive community and in this manner prepared the way for an extended mission. Above all, it had for its direct outcome the accession to Christianity of its foremost convert and Apostle. From this time onward the church at Jerusalem falls into the background and the main interest centres on the personality and career of Paul.

Stephen thus signalises the transition from the earlier to the later development, and we think of him chiefly in his relation to that new and larger phase of Christian history which he inaugurated. His work merges in that of Paul, of whom in more than a superficial sense he was the forerunner. But in point of historical fact Stephen belonged to the early community, and perhaps he has a greater significance for the time that preceded than for the time that followed him. For one moment the obscurity that overhangs the

initial period is illuminated by the passage across it of this memorable figure; and we are able to form some estimate of the new movement as it had now shaped itself, after several years of silent growth.

The episode of Stephen is the more instructive as it is recorded for us in sources which we can employ with some degree of confidence. Here, if anywhere in the early chapters of the book of Acts, we seem to find evidence that Luke is availing himself of authentic documents which he has not revised so carefully but we may still detach the several strands out of which his narrative is woven. This conviction, forced on us by detailed study of the historical section, makes it highly probable that in his record also of the speech of Stephen Luke has a primitive source before him. This probability is raised almost to a certainty when we examine the speech itself. (1) The fulness with which it is reported is out of all proportion to the scale of the book. It is difficult to believe that Luke, with his fine sense of literary fitness, would have encumbered his narrative with this long dissertation unless it had come down to him in some genuine source which he was anxious to preserve. (2) It is not only unduly long but irrelevant, so much so that all writers on the apostolic age have been puzzled to discover its exact purpose. The charges on which Stephen is on trial for his life are left unanswered; no care

is taken to make the speech appropriate to the audience and the circumstances. If Luke had himself composed it he would surely have thrown into it something of that dramatic force of which he was a master. A similar opportunity is offered him later in the book, and we have only to contrast this colourless speech of Stephen with the magnificent defence of Paul before Agrippa. There appears, indeed, to be good ground for the conjecture that the speech ought properly to have been connected with Stephen's disputing in the synagogue as described in the previous chapter.* Luke either failed to apprehend its true setting or purposely transposed it to its present place in order to invest the abstract discussion with a more human interest. It may be regarded not as the defence of Stephen before the council but as a summary of Stephen's preaching preserved in some document which had fallen into the hands of Luke. (3) The argument, irrelevant to its circumstances, is itself obscure. We have the impression, as we try to make out its drift, that it represents a mode of Christian apologetic which in Luke's day had already become unintelligible. On a superficial view the argument attributed to Paul, in his speech at Antioch in Pisidia,† follows a somewhat similar line. Paul begins, like Stephen,

* So Bacon in his valuable monograph, "The Speech of Stephen."

† Acts 13 : 16 *ff.*

with a survey of the early history of Israel, tracing it down from the bondage in Egypt to the reign of David; and from this coincidence it has been inferred that both speeches are the free composition of Luke. But a closer comparison seems to make it evident that the later speech is an imitation of the earlier one and betrays a misunderstanding of its real meaning. The historical survey is suddenly broken off, as if the writer could not tell what conclusions he ought to draw from it. It serves merely as a prelude which might well be dispensed with, while for Stephen it obviously had some vital bearing on the whole claim and import of Christianity.

In view of these various indications we may be reasonably confident that in the speech of Stephen we have an early document incorporated, not altogether skilfully, in the book of Acts. There is no intrinsic evidence that Stephen was the author of the speech, and Luke may have assigned it to him in the same manner as he attributes other anonymous fragments of early preaching to Peter. But he apparently has some reason to believe that it represents Stephen's mode of teaching; and from the care with which he has preserved it, in spite of its seeming irrelevance, we may conclude that it had actually come down to him under the name of Stephen. It may be hazardous to maintain, as some scholars have ventured to do, that in this chapter of Acts we

have the earliest extant document of Christian literature; but there is no fair reason to doubt that it bears the impress of primitive ideas. The results to which we have been led along previous lines of inquiry will receive a new confirmation if they can be shown to explain and illustrate the speech of Stephen.

In the introduction to his account of Stephen, Luke incidentally informs us of two facts, which are of the highest interest and importance. (1) He indicates, in the first place, that the Hellenistic element had already become prominent in the church—so prominent that special measures had to be taken to meet its needs. Nothing has been told us in the earlier chapters concerning this large accession of foreign-born Jews. We suddenly learn for the first time that they had been peculiarly attracted to the new movement and now formed a considerable section of its adherents. From this fact it has been argued that Christianity, even in its initial period, bore something of an alien character and made its strongest appeal to those who were outside of the strict pale of Judaism. But reasoning of this kind is highly precarious. We know from various sources that the Law was no less jealously guarded by the foreign than by the Palestinian Jews. Paul endured his chief persecutions at the hands of his countrymen of the Dispersion; and it was the

Hellenists, as we learn from this very chapter of Acts, who instituted the proceedings against Stephen. Indeed, it may be presumed that the foreign Jews resident in Jerusalem were in a special degree attached to Judaism, since it can hardly have been any other than a religious motive which had led them to settle in the holy city. At the same time we have to remember the distinction, already considered, between the ceremonial and the speculative sides of Jewish piety. Jews who had lived under the influences of the larger gentile world were familiar with ideas which played little part in the ordinary religion of Palestine. They had learned to be receptive of new truth even while they held with uncompromising firmness to their observance of the Law. The philosophical movement of Alexandria was only the most notable of many efforts on the part of Jews of the Dispersion to read fresh meanings into the tenets of Judaism. Their very ardour for the Law inspired them with the desire to present it in such a fashion that it might appeal to the world as a universal message.

It may be conjectured that this liberality of thought among the Hellenists had something to do with their attraction to Christianity. They were not committed, like the majority of Palestinian Jews, to one unvarying type of belief. They welcomed the breadth and suggestiveness of the Christian teaching and perceived its larger

possibilities when these were still hidden from the original disciples. The grand theological development of the next generation was entirely due to the Hellenist Paul and his companions, and we may believe that their work had already its commencement at Jerusalem. The foreign-born Jews who had found their way into the community took up the new teachings in a bold, speculative spirit. They worked them out along unexpected lines to issues from which the older Apostles were inclined to shrink.

(2) Here, perhaps, we find the true explanation of the other fact which is recorded in this notice in Acts. The two sections of the church, we are told, fell into disagreement over a matter of practical administration. The Hellenists believed that their poor were being neglected in the arrangements made for the common meal, and in order to pacify them seven officers were appointed for the special purpose of watching over their interests. Luke records the names of these seven, and it may be assumed that he found them in some authentic document, for with two exceptions they are otherwise quite unknown. Now it is probably true that the dissension in the church had its immediate cause in practical difficulties such as Luke describes. The attempt to maintain the principle of all things in common must have given rise to constant friction, as soon as the church had outgrown its small beginnings. Charges

of favouritism and injustice would easily gain credence, and the alien members would be especially sensitive to any fancied slight on the part of the Palestinian majority. But when we read between the lines of Luke's narrative, it becomes almost certain that the dissension must have had other and deeper motives than he would have us believe. It is evident that the Seven were by no means appointed for the sole duty of supervising the distribution of charity. Stephen at once began an active propaganda in the Hellenistic synagogues, and his missionary activity appears to have been directly connected with his new office. Philip, likewise, comes before us from this time onward in his character of an evangelist. Moreover, there is no indication that the Apostles gave up their "service of tables," confining themselves henceforward to the preaching of the Word. Their duties, so far as we can judge, continued to be exactly the same as before the Seven were appointed to relieve them. What seems to have been effected was a separation not of duties but of spheres of activity. The church agreed to divide itself into two sections, the Palestinian majority remaining as it was, under the supervision of the Apostles, while the Hellenists formed a group by themselves, with their own leaders. In this manner a solution was sought for what threatened to become a grave difficulty.

It is hard to believe that this division of the

community was brought about solely by the trivial cause suggested in Luke's narrative. We may guess, rather, that the practical difference was only the index of a much more serious cleavage, which for some time had been growing manifest. The Hellenists were developing a type of Christianity which was not entirely consistent with that of the Apostles, and while full liberty was granted them it was deemed better that they should remain apart. It may be that the decision adopted at a later time by the council of Jerusalem was influenced by the precedent of this earliest dispute in the church. In both cases an agreement was sought by means of a friendly separation. And as Paul and Barnabas in the later instance were left free to evangelise the gentiles, while the older Apostles preached to the Jews, so now the missionary field was divided. The Seven were intrusted not only with the supervision of the foreign-born converts, but with the work of propaganda among the Hellenists; and it was in the prosecution of this work that Stephen was accused and put to death.

The procedure against Stephen is described in a confused and contradictory manner, owing to the attempt to blend together two different accounts. On the one hand, we are told that he was brought to a formal trial before the council, in presence of which he delivered his speech of

defence. On the other hand, we are left with the impression that he was the victim of an outbreak on the part of an angry mob which took the law into its own hands. That there were proceedings of some kind before the council can hardly be doubted, in view of the subsequent events. A persecution arose against the Hellenistic wing of the church, and was carried out under official sanction by emissaries duly accredited by the high priest. The council would not thus have indorsed the action of a lawless mob unless it had itself in some fashion taken the initiative. At the same time, when we consider the restricted powers allowed to the council by the Roman administration, we cannot believe that a sentence of death was passed on Stephen. For that part, the narrative in Acts itself, although it describes a death by stoning according to the regular forms of Mosaic Law, says nothing about a sentence. It gives us to understand that the trial was interrupted, and that orderly proceedings were suddenly forgotten in an outburst of passion. The precise facts cannot now be recovered. So far as we can gather, Stephen died in a popular tumult, but with the connivance of the council, which had already set on foot some kind of inquiry into his teaching. A formal charge had been lodged against him, to which his speech is the ostensible reply, and the very irrelevance of the speech is proof that the charge has not been merely invented for the sake of introducing it.

The charge is recorded in two forms, and here again we may discern the attempt to make room for two narratives, originally distinct. According to one version (Acts 6 : 11) false witnesses were suborned, who testified: "We have heard this man speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God." Later on (6 : 13) the false witnesses declare before the council, "This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the Law"; the specific ground of the accusation being then added: "For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us." Thus, in one record, the gravamen of the charge is disloyalty to the Law; in the other, hostility to the temple and its ritual. This second version may fairly be considered the more accurate one. In the speech that follows, Stephen says nothing that could be construed into treason against the Law; he assumes, rather, that reverence for the Law is common ground between himself and his adversaries. Moreover, in its second form the charge has a certain correspondence with what we know to have been the attitude of the primitive church. The belief undoubtedly was held by the disciples that Jesus would presently return to inaugurate a new order, and this belief may be recognised with sufficient clearness in the prejudiced report of the "false witnesses."

It is not a little significant that the charge against Stephen bears a close analogy to that which was brought against Jesus himself. He was accused of saying, "I will destroy this temple and build it again in three days"; and, though we are assured, as in the case of Stephen, that the accusation was made by "false witnesses," there can be little doubt that the words were in some form actually spoken. The fourth evangelist repeats the saying as a genuine utterance of Jesus and adds an explanation of its meaning which is obviously fanciful. Ignorant as we are of the context of the saying and the occasion on which it was spoken, we cannot determine its true import—this had apparently become a matter of conjecture as early as the Fourth Gospel. But it is reasonable to suppose that Stephen consciously took up the words of Jesus, interpreting them in the sense which is suggested in the last part of his speech (7 : 48 *ff.*). God is not confined in temples made with hands. In the kingdom which was presently to set in the relation of men to God would be an immediate and spiritual one and the temple with its ordinances would be necessary no longer.

We pass, then, to the consideration of the speech itself, which cannot, as we have seen, have been delivered at the trial in answer to the given charge. It consists for the most part of a long

historical argument and closes with a passage of stern denunciation; from beginning to end there is nothing to suggest a speech of defence before a judicial court. We may even doubt whether it is a transcript of any definite speech. More probably it is meant to be an example of the type of argument which Stephen was wont to employ in his disputings with the Hellenistic Jews. The record may have been drawn up after his death, partly by way of tribute to a revered teacher and partly to afford guidance to subsequent missionaries who were engaged in similar work.

The speech, as we have it, ends abruptly with the declaration that the murder of the "Just One" was of a piece with that disobedience to God which had marked the whole course of Jewish history. "Ye have received the Law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it." It is difficult to believe that the original document stopped short at this point, and the probability is that Luke himself abridged it in order to enhance the effect of the scene that follows. The denunciation of the unfaithful people has not a few analogies in the Old Testament and the New; and in the light of these we may guess the nature of the lost conclusion. It would set forth the inevitable doom that waited on disobedience, and this threat of doom would merge in a prophecy of the imminent Parousia. Jesus, whom the people had rejected and crucified, was about to re-

turn as Messiah and summon them to his judgment. It is possible that in the later words of Stephen, "Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God," we have a fragment of the lost ending of the speech itself. The title, "Son of man," which occurs only here outside of the Gospels, is uniformly connected by Jesus with the thought of his return in power. Stephen may have employed it in the same manner while he set before his hearers an impressive picture of the Parousia that was just at hand.

The body of the speech, then, consists of a historical retrospect. Many scholars have tried to see in it a complete survey of the history of Israel as falling into three main periods: (*a*) from Abraham to Moses; (*b*) from Moses to David; (*c*) the culminating age of David and Solomon. But a regular plan of this character cannot be made out. We have not so much a consecutive survey as a selection of certain typical and outstanding episodes in the history of the ancient people; Abraham and his call, the life of Moses, the building of the temple.

What is the purpose underlying this apparently aimless retrospect of Old Testament history? Here we arrive at the central problem of the speech, and a solution has been sought for it along a great number of diverging lines. Most of the explanations have proceeded on the as-

sumption that the speech is Stephen's answer to the charges brought against him. He is bent on proving that his doctrine does not involve a menace to the Law, that he does not disparage Moses but reveres him, that it is not he but the Jews themselves who have opposed the ordinances of God. But the attempt to explain the speech in its bearing on the charges only serves to make evident its hopeless irrelevance. It is inconceivable that any man, defending himself against definite accusations, should have gone to work in this roundabout fashion. The charges may have been founded on such a speech as that before us, but it cannot be construed as an answer to them. When we neglect the artificial setting of the speech and take it by itself as a Christian manifesto, the point of its teaching is still far from clear. Some writers have found the cardinal verse in 7 : 37: "This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear." The speech thus resolves itself into a proof of the Messiahship of Jesus, addressed to those who hold fast to the authority of Moses.* Others regard the argument as turning on 7:51 or 7:53, where Stephen accuses the Jews of having always resisted the Holy Ghost. The whole survey of their history has had for its purpose this exposure of their

* So Gfrörer and Spitta.

radical alienation from God, whose chosen people they professed to be. More often the key to the speech has been sought in 7 : 48: "Howbeit the most high dwelleth not in temples made with hands." Here, it is maintained, the purpose of the long review of Israelitish history comes at last to light. Stephen has been bent on proving that the age-long quest of Israel has been for a spiritual religion such as has now been given in Christianity. Every new hope of a resting-place had been in vain, for God will not take up his abode in any earthly temple. The more recent criticism has abandoned the method of seeking for any central verse in the speech and would explain it rather as dealing with a complex of ideas. Thus Bacon sees in it a discussion of the three institutions the right to which is disputed between Jews and Christians: (*a*) the Abrahamic inheritance; (*b*) the Mosaic revelation; (*c*) the Davidic presence of God in Zion.* The aim of the speech is to show, in Alexandrian fashion, how the Old Testament institutions were not final but typical, and have now been realised in Christianity.

None of these theories can be regarded as fully adequate. They either lay stress on some one aspect of the argument to the exclusion of others which are equally important or they resort to

* Schumacher, "Der Diakon Stephanus," also makes the speech turn on the three ideas of the temple, the Law, the Messiah.

subtleties of interpretation which are not in keeping with the character of the speech. It may help us toward a clearer apprehension of the speaker's purpose if we set before us in brief summary the ideas to which he gives prominence: (1) Israel is the chosen people of God.* (2) As such it has received from God the promise of an inheritance, and through all its changing experiences has been seeking the fulfilment of this promise.† (3) God sent to his people a succession of leaders to guide them in their search, but these messengers of God were invariably rejected. Moses himself was disowned in his lifetime by those whom he had been sent to deliver.‡ (4) The search for the promised rest has been always frustrated, not only by disobedience but by the illusory conditions of earthly life. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were sojourners; in Egypt, where the people expected to find a home, they became bondsmen; under Moses they wandered in the wilderness; when they reached the land of promise they worshipped in a moving tabernacle; the temple itself was only the shadow of the true house of God. It is evidently by no mere accident that the historical survey is brought to a close with the building of the temple. Although the history was still to run on for a thousand years it was completed in its inward meaning by

* 7 : 7, 32, 38.
† 5 : 7, 46–47.
‡ 9 : 23, 25*f.*, 35, 39*f.*

that event. God's promise to Abraham had to all appearance reached fulfilment. Israel had secured its earthly inheritance and had entered into permanent relation to God by means of a fixed temple.

When the main ideas of the speech are thus brought together we can scarcely fail to perceive the general drift of the speaker's meaning. He would have us see that Israel, through the whole course of its history, has been striving in vain to fulfil its vocation as the people of God. Time after time, when it seemed won at last, the goal had receded farther into the distance. But the argument has little purpose unless we set it against the background of a thought which is throughout in the speaker's mind. The history of Israel has had its outcome in the birth of the Christian church. That ideal of which the old Israel fell short by its own unfaithfulness and by the restrictions laid upon it has been realised in the new Israel. This is the aim of Stephen—to demonstrate, in the light of Old Testament history, that the Ecclesia represents the true people of God.

He shows, on the one hand, that the church is identical with the ancient Israel. Ages ago God chose for himself a people, and its history has been nothing but one long endeavour, constantly frustrated, to obtain that inheritance to which it was destined. Under one leader and another it had

seemed to come within reach of it, but after each apparent attainment the quest had to be resumed. The Jews are not to think, therefore, that the Christian movement is a breaking away from the past; it takes up the effort of the past and brings it to a consummation. The church is Israel, entering at last on the inheritance. It is significant that in one place Stephen describes the ancient people under the specific name of "the Ecclesia in the wilderness" (7 : 38). Here, it may be said, the thought which pervades the whole speech comes for a moment to definite expression. But, on the other hand, a contrast is drawn between the nation Israel and the church. It is shown that the people as a whole have been consistently disobedient, and have so thwarted God's will with them. Again and again, when he would have given them rest, they threw themselves back into the life of aimless wandering. He had sent them leader after leader, whom they had failed to recognise. Although he had chosen them to be his people, they had resisted his purpose and had proved themselves to be unworthy. Israel as a nation had forfeited its right, and the promises were to find their fulfilment in a new Israel.

Stephen not only holds that the past history of Israel was all a preparation for the future church, but suggests that at each new stage it in some manner foreshadowed it. The successive de-

liverers whom God had sent were types of the coming deliverer. The various resting-places to which the people attained under their leadership pointed forward to the ultimate rest. The outward communion with God which Israel had enjoyed by means of tabernacle and temple was prophetic of a higher, spiritual relation. This strain of typology that runs through the speech is one of its most curious and perplexing features, but we must be careful not to make too much of it. At the most it is only incidental to the main conception—that Israel, throughout its history, was growing toward its realisation in the Christian church. Its past experience was full of anticipations and presentiments of the Ecclesia in which it would find its goal.

Stephen was brought to trial on the express charge that he had blasphemed the temple. The charge, according to Acts, was based on the testimony of "false witnesses," but we have indications in the extant speech that criticism of the temple and its ritual formed an important element in his teaching. His survey of the history of Israel leads up to the declaration that the temple built by Solomon was only temporary and provisional, for "the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands." It is in this feature of Stephen's thought that we are probably to detect that new influence which was introduced

into Christianity by the Hellenists. In the persecution that broke out after Stephen's death, they alone seem to have been involved, and their offence was no doubt the same as that which was imputed to their leader. They had ventured to call in question the cherished institutions of Judaism. As yet they had no thought of attacking the Law, but they had disputed the permanent validity of the temple worship.

Among Hellenistic Jews the temple never occupied the same place as it did in the religious life of Palestine. The pious Hellenist indeed regarded it as the traditional shrine of his people, and contributed his yearly offerings for the maintenance of its ordinances. But his devotion was bound up with the Law much more than with the temple. As a citizen of the world he had learned to throw off the narrow conception of his religion as a local cult and secretly resented the claims of the Jerusalem priesthood. After the destruction of the temple it became the object of passionate regret and longing, and the later literature of Judaism is filled with lamentations over the house of God, now violated by the heathen. But of this devotion there is little trace in the century preceding. Outside of Palestine, Judaism regarded the temple with a certain jealousy and emphasised its right to stand apart from it. Among the Hellenistic converts there were no doubt some who were already impatient of the temple, and their in-

stinct of revolt would be strengthened by the Christian teaching. Jesus had revived the old prophetic conception of religion. He had made it clear that the service of God did not consist in sacrifices but in obedience to his will. He had done away with that old covenant, bound up with external ordinances and prerogatives of race, of which the temple was the visible symbol. The original disciples do not appear to have perceived that the new beliefs could not be reconciled with the temple worship, but the Hellenists were alive to the inconsistency. They held that the new community had entered into a higher relation to God, for which the ancient localised ritual had no significance. Apparently it was Stephen who first gave clear expression to this belief and enforced it by his martyrdom. But we can gather from the persecution which immediately overtook the Hellenistic Christians that he had spoken as their representative. Through these half-alien converts who had brought to Jerusalem the influences of a larger culture Christianity had begun to feel its way toward its universal mission.

As yet the criticism of Jewish institutions was directed solely against the temple. Concerning the Law, which was the true substance of Judaism, Stephen speaks with unabated reverence. It is noticeable, however, that he departs altogether from the attitude of Peter, whose speeches are

carefully framed so as to conciliate Jewish sentiment. He breaks out into an open attack on the Jews. Their rejection of Jesus is no longer attributed to "ignorance," but to a spirit of unbelief which could be traced through all their past history and had now reached its culmination. This arraignment of the Jews brings us within sight of the final rupture; but there is no ground for asserting, with some historians, that Stephen anticipated that breach with Judaism which was effected by Paul. The invective at the close of the speech is not a declaration of war any more than the similar passages in the preaching of the prophets and of John the Baptist. We should probably find, if the lost conclusion could be recovered, that its purpose was to rouse the people to a true repentance in view of the approaching judgment. It was indeed Stephen who hastened the conflict with Judaism and made the gentile mission inevitable, but he stood himself within the primitive community. This singular position which he occupies gives him his chief significance in early Christian history.

An interesting and difficult problem, of which New Testament criticism has taken too little account, is suggested by the affinity of the speech of Stephen to the so-called Epistle to the Hebrews. Different as the two writings are in character and style and purpose, they have at least the following

well-marked features in common: (1) A typological value is discerned in the facts of the Old Testament narrative. (2) The life of Israel is described as one of wandering—in search of something real and permanent. (3) The failure to enter into the promised "rest" is explained from the unbelief of the people. (4) The contrast of Christianity with the ancient religion turns on ideas which are connected with the temple. (5) Besides these main points of agreement, there are similarities in detail; *e. g.*, Moses appears as a type of Christ; * emphasis is laid on the construction of the tabernacle after a heavenly pattern.† The explanation of this affinity between Hebrews and the speech of Stephen (which could easily be demonstrated in greater detail) has been sought in a common Alexandrian influence. If this could be established we should have to regard the speech as a comparatively late product, and the question would then arise how this Alexandrian fragment, so little adapted to his purpose, came to be introduced by Luke into his account of the primitive history. But, apart from such critical difficulties, it may fairly be argued that the speech is distinguished from the epistle by the pronounced absence of the Alexandrian turn of thought. Old Testament sayings and inci-

* Acts 7 : 37 *ff.*; Heb. 3 : 2 *ff.* This comparison is drawn nowhere in the New Testament except in these two writings.

† Acts 7 : 44; Heb. 8 : 5.

dents are not interpreted allegorically. The temple is not contrasted with the higher ideal sanctuary but with the universality of God's presence. Jesus is not invested with the attributes of the Logos, but is simply the Messianic Deliverer.

It is not too bold to conjecture that the true solution of the problem may be found along another line. Instead of assuming that the speech of Stephen is tinged with later philosophical speculation, we may suppose that the Epistle to the Hebrews, in spite of its Alexandrian colouring, perpetuates a mode of thought which had come down from the primitive church. The enigmatical epistle is usually classed as Deutero-Pauline, but there is hardly another New Testament writing which diverges so widely from the cardinal Pauline ideas. What it possesses in common with Paul may well have been derived not from him but from that normal Christian tradition on which he himself was dependent. It needs to be more clearly recognised that, although Paul with his mighty genius determined the main current of Christian thinking, there were other streams that maintained their course alongside of Paulinism. One of these may have taken its rise from the teaching of Stephen. As time went on it would broaden and deepen and assimilate to itself elements from the prevailing philosophy, while still preserving its continuity with

Stephen and through him with the primitive church.

The speech of Stephen, then, may reasonably be considered as an authentic document of primary importance, which enables us in some measure to ascertain the bearings of Christian thought at the close of the initial period. Traces of the coming development are already discernible. The church has been invaded by new forces which are breaking down its alliance with Judaism and moulding it for the task that lay before it in the gentile world. But, in the main, the speech is concerned with those ideas which we have seen, in the course of our investigation, to have been characteristic of the earliest days. To the mind of Stephen everything depends on the claim of the church to be the true Israel. God had made a promise to his people, but the whole course of Jewish history had proved that it was not intended for Israel as a nation. The fulfilment was reserved for a new community, springing out of Israel but distinct from it; and the condition of membership in the new community was faith in that Jesus whom the nation had rejected. It is not a little remarkable that Stephen hardly touches on what we might consider the specific elements of Christian belief. Nothing is directly said of the purpose of Jesus' death, of his resurrection, of his Messianic office. He is described

simply as the "Just One"—the ideally righteous man of whom the Old Testament leaders had been the types and heralds. This apparent neglect of the fundamental Christian ideas may be partly set down to the controversial intention of the speech. Stephen was not making a strictly missionary appeal, but was "disputing in the synagogue," and his object was to defend the Christian position against orthodox Jews who would urge the validity of God's promises to Israel. But the peculiar line of argument which is followed in the speech cannot be wholly accounted for by the exigencies of controversy. We have to admit that Stephen insists on the claim of the church to be the true Israel because he regards this as the central fact in the Christian message. God had promised to the fathers that he would lead his people to their inheritance, and the time was at hand when this promise should be fulfilled. But the people which he had contemplated was not the nation. Within the historical Israel there had ever been a hidden Israel of God; and it had now realised its hope in that new community which acknowledged Jesus as Lord.

LECTURE X

THE EARLIEST CHRISTIANITY

WITH the persecution that ensued on the death of Stephen the initial period of Christian history came to an end. In itself the persecution was not a severe one, for the council was limited in its powers by the Roman administration and could only enforce such minor penalties as scourging and imprisonment. In the exercise even of this modified right of discipline it seems to have proceeded cautiously. The fact was recognised that Stephen had been the leader of the Hellenistic Christians, and the action of the council affected only this foreign section of the church. The Apostles, who would have been the first victims in any real attempt to suppress the new movement, were left unmolested, and under their direction the native Christian community continued to hold its own at Jerusalem. None the less, the persecution was followed by far-reaching consequences. In the first place, the Hellenists, expelled from Palestine, took up their abode in Damascus, Antioch, and other gentile cities, and from this time onward these became the true centres of the propaganda. Again, the more advanced

type of Christianity for which the Hellenists had stood was now set free from the checks that had been imposed on it at Jerusalem. In the distant gentile cities it was able to develop along its own lines and was affected still further by influences from without. Once more, the community that remained at Jerusalem began to change its character, now that it was left wholly to itself. It is probable that if the Hellenists had remained they would gradually have leavened the Jewish section of the church with their more liberal ideas, and the long conflict which embittered the life of Paul might have been unnecessary. As it was, the church was powerless to resist the encroachments of Judaism. Not only the removal of the Hellenists, but the events that had caused it, must have strengthened the tendency to reaction; for it was now evident that Jewish sentiment was alarmed. Any further advance might precipitate that breach with the national religion which the church, as a whole, was anxious to avert.

Thus after the death of Stephen the two sections of the church were separated, and, while the Hellenists achieved a larger freedom, the original community stood still or even went backward. Hitherto, in spite of all external bonds with Judaism, it had been absorbed in its own mission and had worn its fetters lightly. Now it was burdened with the feeling that at all costs it must preserve its loyalty to the parent religion. This

relapse into a Jewish Christianity became far more pronounced after the second persecution under Herod Agrippa a few years later. This second persecution was more serious than the first, for it was supported by the power of the state, now restored to a brief independence. It was directed, too, not against a party but against the new religion, which had at last been recognised as dangerous. At least one of the Apostles was put to death; the others were threatened with a like fate, and only saved themselves by flight from the city. Although the immediate peril was soon brought to an end with the return to the old political conditions, its effects on the Jerusalem church appear to have been lasting. How it happened we can only conjecture, but there are clear indications that during the enforced absence of Peter and his colleagues a new party rose to ascendancy. Under the leadership of James the community at Jerusalem became more and more Jewish in its sympathies, and took up an attitude of ill-concealed antagonism to the progressive church of the gentiles.

It by no means follows that the mother church was now excluded from all share in the larger work of Christianity. There is abundant evidence that, in spite of all reactionary influences, it maintained a vigorous life. Jerusalem became the centre of an active and successful mission to the outlying regions of Palestine, and in all likelihood

charged itself with a propaganda among various communities of the Dispersion. In virtue of its traditions, it exercised a powerful if undefined authority over the Christian cause throughout the world. The church at Jerusalem was the ultimate court of appeal in all disputes concerning worship and doctrine. Its practice was normative in matters of ecclesiastical custom. The adversaries of Paul were chiefly formidable because they professed to speak to the gentile converts with the voice of Jerusalem. Paul himself, amidst all differences, continued to cherish a genuine reverence for the mother church. His last years of freedom were largely devoted to his scheme of a collection on behalf of its poorer members; and behind the other motives which prompted him to this work there may have been the idea of confederating the scattered churches around their natural centre. But although Jerusalem thus remained the foremost Christian community and only lost this position after the siege and destruction of the city, its real importance was confined to the initial years. It was then that it made its vital contribution, and the essential history of the church was henceforth enacted on a different stage.

That early contribution, however, was of incalculable value. In those first years the church was brought into existence and grew to the strength which enabled it to undertake its world-

wide task. In those years, too, the main beliefs of Christianity were determined, its fundamental institutions were created. The Ecclesia, as it took shape at Jerusalem, became the model of all those communities which in the course of the next century were planted far and wide among the cities of the Roman world. An endeavour has been made in the preceding chapters to understand the aims and teachings of that primitive church so far as they can be ascertained in the dim light of the later record. It only remains to gather up the broad results of the investigation and to form some estimate of their significance.

As we pass from the Gospels to the book of Acts, we find it difficult to realise that we are following a continued story—resumed at the point where it had been interrupted. It is not merely that the supreme figure of Jesus is now removed. We feel as if his life had become distant and unreal, and the cause to which he had devoted himself had given place to another. It has been generally assumed in modern criticism that the continuity of the movement was indeed broken by the death of the Founder. In consequence of the great disaster, his work had fallen into ruin and had all to be reconstructed, slowly and tentatively, on a fresh basis. What was now put forward as the Christian gospel was derived, not from the teaching of Jesus, but from a given interpretation

of his person and of the crowning facts of his death and resurrection. His own gospel had been direct and simple and had aimed at a renewal of the moral life on the ground of a truer conception of man's relation to God. This simple message was now invested with mystery and was buried under ever new layers of dogma and institution until the religion of Jesus gave place to the Catholic system of the centuries following.

Now, it may be granted that Jesus was concerned, in the last resort, with a few great principles, which were purely religious in their nature. He revealed God as the Father, and taught that the right attitude to him is one of trust and love. He set forth in words and exemplified in his life the true righteousness, which consists in inward, spontaneous obedience to the will of God. These were the vital elements in his message, and all the rest was framework, existing for the sake of them. Nevertheless, the message was given in that framework. Those conceptions which we can now recognise as permanent were mingled with others which were borrowed from the thought of the time and which appealed even more directly to the minds of the first disciples. In order to determine the relation between the primitive church and Jesus, we must take account not only of the substance of his teaching but of those traditional forms under which it was presented.

We are here confronted with a problem which

is involved in manifold difficulties and is perhaps incapable of any final solution. The difficulties, however, are chiefly connected with details of interpretation, and these ought not to be emphasised in such a manner as to obscure certain broad facts which stand out with sufficient clearness when we weigh the plain evidence of the Gospels. Jesus attached his message to those apocalyptic beliefs to which the preaching of John the Baptist had now given a mighty impulse. The kingdom of God—the new age in which the will of God would absolutely prevail—was close at hand. As heirs of this new age, God would acknowledge not the children of Israel as a people but those only who were morally worthy. Jesus, like John, proclaimed the kingdom and called on men to prepare themselves for its coming. He conceived of it, we can scarcely doubt, as in the future—an entirely new order which would be ushered in suddenly and miraculously by the immediate act of God. Yet the future and the present were blended together in his mind. The kingdom was so near that the approach of it could be felt already. Men could avail themselves of its powers; they could so apprehend its higher law and conform their lives to it that they might become even now the children of the new age. In the assurance that the kingdom was all but come, Jesus gathered around him a company of followers in whom by word and example he sought to effect a

radical change of will. His purpose was that they should form the nucleus of that new people, that redeemed community, which God would set apart for himself after his judgment of the world. It is impossible to doubt that, at least in the later part of his ministry, Jesus connected the coming of the kingdom with his own personality. He claimed to be himself the Messiah, or rather anticipated that he would be raised to the Messiahship when the kingdom was on the point of opening. As he perceived his death at the hands of his enemies to be inevitable, he saw in it the divinely appointed means whereby he would accomplish his vocation. Offering himself for death, he would become "a ransom for many" and thus overcome all those hindrances on the part of men which delayed the fulfilment of God's purpose. In his death, too, he would break through the limitations of his earthly life and rise to that Messianic glory in which he would presently return to bring in the kingdom of God.

Such, in broad outline, were those conceptions which Jesus took over from the thought of his time and which formed the background of his purely religious teaching. For us they have become largely unintelligible. We construe them in a vague spiritual sense or forget them altogether in our concentration on the essential message of which they were the setting. But to the first disciples they were of paramount importance.

As pious Jews they had grown up amidst dreams of the kingdom, and Jesus had now declared that it was near; he had died to hasten its advent, he had risen in power to transform it into a glorious reality. For the earliest believers the message of Jesus was inseparable from the apocalyptic hope, and in this fact we have the key to the subsequent history.

The church was created, if we look only to its immediate origin, by the belief that Christ had risen. How the disciples arrived at this belief and in what form they held it we cannot tell, but we know that they accepted it as the very corner-stone of their faith. From this it has been inferred that primitive Christianity was divorced, at the outset, from the facts of the Gospel history. A new and tremendous event had broken in and had half obliterated the memory of past days, even in the minds of Jesus' personal followers. He was no longer the Friend and Master whom they had known, but the exalted Messiah. His actual deeds and purposes were forgotten in the thought of his present glory and the work he would now accomplish. But may it not be suggested that precisely here we can discover the root error of the usual modern interpretations of the early history? They assume that the death and resurrection were new and disturbing factors which compelled his followers to reconstruct all

their previous ideas of Jesus. His teaching was now of quite secondary value, for it had no light to throw on those mysterious events in which his life had culminated. But if we accept the Gospel evidence—and on this point there is no valid reason to doubt it—he had himself contemplated these events and had related them to his message. In his later ministry he had foretold them to his disciples, and had taught that they were integral with his mission as a whole. It was this, indeed, that gave significance to the resurrection, which would otherwise have been nothing but a marvellous and inexplicable fact. It brought to a focus the whole work of Jesus. Instead of obscuring that message of the kingdom which had occupied him in his lifetime, it confirmed and illuminated it and filled it with new meaning.

From this point of view we can understand how the church was the outcome of the belief in the resurrection. Jesus had taught that the kingdom was at hand, that he himself was the destined Messiah who would bring it in, that through death he would be exalted to his Messianic office. The resurrection was evidence to the disciples that all had happened as he had foretold. He had now attained to the Messiahship; yet a little time and he would return in power to inaugurate the kingdom. But for the followers of Jesus this coming of the kingdom was fraught with a special significance. He had promised them a part in the

great future, and the knowledge that he had risen, confirming as it did his message of the kingdom, filled them with an absorbing consciousness of their own vocation. The new age was at hand, and they had been chosen to possess it. By this very fact they were withdrawn from the old order and were consecrated as a people by themselves—the new community of the kingdom. The belief in the resurrection thus issued of its own accord in the formation of the church.

One point has here been touched on which it may be necessary to emphasise a little further. The assumption is generally made, by writers on the apostolic age, that the church came into existence by a gradual process. First of all, the belief that Jesus had risen impressed itself on a number of his followers, and they were thus won to the conviction that he was, indeed, the Messiah. To support one another in their common faith they formed themselves into a society which by degrees became more highly organised and adopted certain customs and institutions. In the course of time the interests of Christian men were more and more involved in the society until at last it acquired a religious significance of its own. But this account of the origin of the church is not borne out by the historical facts. From the very beginning, so far as we can gather from our records, the believers were all united in a

brotherhood. Their union with one another did not come about gradually through the faith they held in common, but was essentially bound up with it. Faith in Christ, by its very nature, implied a connection with the brotherhood. This intimate relation of personal faith and fellowship with the brethren was pointedly expressed in the rite of baptism, wherein the convert made solemn confession of his belief in Jesus and by so doing was constituted a member of the community. The Christian mission itself bears witness to this interrelation of faith and the idea of the church. The missionaries were not independent teachers intent solely on awakening conviction in many individual minds. They were emissaries of the church working in its name and for its interest. Wherever they went they sought to create a living portion of the Ecclesia. Their converts might be only a handful, gathering for worship in the room of a private house, but they were taught to regard themselves as the church in that house —the Ecclesia in miniature. To the early Christian mind a purely individual faith seems to have been unthinkable. So far from developing gradually by a historical process, the church was a primary fact in Christianity. All that was personal in the faith and lives of the believers was rooted in a communal consciousness.

This mood will become more intelligible if two considerations are borne in mind. On the one

hand, our religion grew up under the conditions of ancient thought, in which the individual had not yet come to his own. It is true that Christianity secured a new value for the individual. Jesus had declared, in many a memorable saying, that all men stand in a personal relation to God and that his providence takes account of them one by one. None the less, it was impossible all at once to liberate this new conception from the collectivism which was instinctive to the ancient mind. For the Jews, more especially, the tribal idea had won its way into the very substance of religion. The object of God's choice had been Israel as a people, and individual Israelites had access to him as members of the chosen nation. On the other hand—and this was the decisive factor in early Christian thought—Jesus himself, with all his insistence on the worth of the individual, had kept before him the idea of a redeemed community. He had proclaimed the new age in which God would be served by a people wrought into harmony with his will. He had formed his disciples into a brotherhood, thinking and working together, that they might be the nucleus of that community of the future. When they were assured, therefore, by their visions of the risen Jesus that he had now entered on his Messiahship their faith in him was inseparable from the sense of their common vocation. He had called them to be the new people of God. They were

members of one body and were conscious, individually, of a higher life through their union with one another.

The church of the first days must not, indeed, be confounded with that of later Christian history. It was not an organisation equipped for a definite task in this world, but the brotherhood of those who had identified themselves with the age to come. Jesus had himself declared that the old social order, with its outward rules and authorities, would presently disappear and would give place to another in which the will of God would be all in all. His disciples sought to anticipate this future order. They acknowledged no forms of government or stated officers; they held all things in common; they were bound together by no visible and artificial ties. The idea of building up a great institution, such as the church became in a subsequent age, was utterly foreign to their minds. They were simply the new community maintaining itself for a little while under earthly conditions until the kingdom should break in.

The nature of the Christian society is defined in its name "the Ecclesia," a name which has a twofold significance. (*a*) It denoted the true Israel to which had descended the calling and the privileges of God's chosen people. A distinction had long ago been drawn by the prophets between the nation as a whole and the "remnant" —the true servants of God who, in his sight, were

the nation. The church conceived itself to be the "remnant" and laid claim on this ground to a continuity with the ancient Israel. In one sense it was no new creation but had existed ever since God had first chosen for himself a people. When the kingdom arrived the faithful of the past would be raised to life again and would form one community with the believers in Christ. This conception of an Israel of God with which the church was continuous was of cardinal importance in the earliest Christian thought; for only by means of it could the church establish its right in the Old Testament promises. The disciples had broken with Jewish nationalism and the religion of the Law had become meaningless to them; yet they shrank from the inevitable separation. A feeling persisted that the new Israel derived its prerogative through the actual Israel and might forfeit its title if it freed itself entirely from the Law.

(*b*) But while it was the true Israel the church was also the community of the kingdom. It was continuous with the Ecclesia of the past; but now that Jesus had risen to his Messiahship all things had become different. The inheritance which was formerly the object of hope and longing had drawn near, and the church was entering into it. Identified as it was with the new order, there was something supernatural in its character. It was endowed with higher attributes and was conscious of a divine power inspiring and controlling

it. This consciousness found expression in the doctrine of the Spirit which coloured all the thought and life of primitive Christianity. A belief had been current, ever since the time of the prophets, that when the new age arrived a power from on high, corresponding with their new status, would be poured out on God's people. In former times it had been imparted at rare intervals to chosen individuals, but in the latter days it would be shared by the whole community. By means of it men would be brought to a closer relation to God, to a fuller knowledge of him, to the exercise of higher gifts and activities. The church was assured that it had now received this Spirit. Its operation was discerned in the strange phenomena that manifested themselves in Christian worship; but these were regarded as only the index of a new energy pervading the Christian life. The Spirit, present in the believer, transformed his entire nature and impressed a new character on all his action. And though its gifts were manifold and were bestowed in varying measure, all had received their part in them. In the last resort the Spirit was the possession not of individual men but of the whole church. It was like the vital principle diffused through the body, and quickening the different members because of their union with the body. Underlying the doctrine of the Spirit we can discover that communal consciousness in which all primitive Christian think-

ing was involved. The individual believers were bound up with the church. They claimed to possess the Spirit in so far as they belonged to the spiritual community which God had chosen for his kingdom.

There is no ground, then, for the hypothesis, often assumed as self-evident, that after the death of Jesus his message was practically forgotten and he himself became the one interest of faith. It may be gathered, rather, that personal devotion to Jesus was a later development. At the outset the disciples were absorbed in the hope of the kingdom which he had foretold, and out of that hope the church was born. But while the message of Jesus was thus primary, it was connected inseparably with Jesus himself. The more it was cherished, the more clearly he stood out in his own person as the centre and foundation of the Christian life. (1) A new value revealed itself even in his earthly ministry. He had proclaimed the kingdom and had set forth its nature and the requirements of its moral order. For the disciples his teaching was now authoritative. Their expectation of the kingdom, instead of making them forgetful of the life of Jesus, served only to enhance its significance. He was the prophet of the way—the teacher of the new righteousness. A duty was laid on all who sought the kingdom to keep his words and example ever before them, for thus

alone could they conform their lives to that higher law which would obtain hereafter. We mistake the whole character of early Christianity if we forget that the mood of enthusiasm was accompanied by a conscious imitation of Jesus. This practical obedience to him was nothing, indeed, but the other side of the apocalyptic hope. (2) In the knowledge that he was now clothed with power his followers had the assurance that the kingdom was at hand and that they were destined to have part in it. The belief in Jesus' Messiahship was thus the keystone of the entire structure of Christianity. Faith directed itself to him, for apart from him there could be no hope of the kingdom, no Ecclesia, no participation in the Spirit. (3) His Parousia was to give the signal for the final consummation. Although the inheritance was certain, it was still in the future and could not be fully realised until Jesus returned to fulfil his work. Thus the hope of the kingdom resolved itself into a waiting for the appearance of Christ. This was the habitual mood of the believer, and out of it grew the feeling that the Christian life was incorporated with Christ and could only attain its fruition through him. "Ye are dead," says Paul, "and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then we also shall appear with him in glory." *

* Col. 3 : 3, 4.

This central position assigned to Jesus was marked by the title κύριος, which seems even in the earliest days to have displaced that of Messiah. It has to be understood primarily as connoting the relation of Jesus to the church. The world at large had no portion in him and could never know him except as judge, but the church was his own community within which he reigned. To invoke him by the name of Lord was evidence that you belonged to his people and partook in their privileges and obligations. The initiatory rite of baptism was sealed by the confession, "Jesus is Lord." By the act of making that confession a man severed himself from the old order and became one with the new community of the kingdom. But this entrance into the community involved a personal relation to Jesus. Acknowledging him as Lord, you subjected yourself to his will and gave your life into his keeping and were conscious of his abiding fellowship. Faith in Jesus was much more than the bare recognition of his claim to be the Messiah. To the primitive church, as to Paul, it was the decisive factor in Christianity; for it signified a changed attitude of the will—a new direction given to the whole life. The belief in Jesus was inseparable from that entire surrender to him which was implied in the confession, "Jesus is Lord."

More than once in the New Testament the members of the church are described by the peculiar

name, "those who call upon the name of the Lord" (*οἱ ἐπικαλούμενοι τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου*).* The Greek word here employed seems to suggest the practice of actual prayer to Jesus, and some have inferred that even in the earliest period he was regarded as a divine being. If this were so, it would be necessary to suppose that Christianity was affected from the outset by some alien influence, for within the pale of Jewish monotheism such an encroachment on the prerogative of God is hardly conceivable. It may be questioned, however, whether the evidence for prayer to Jesus has not been overpressed by modern writers anxious to discover a foreign element in even the earliest Christian worship. That the regular custom was to address prayer directly to God is attested by numberless passages in the Acts and Epistles. The only clear exceptions are the dying words of Stephen, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," † and the pathetic allusion of Paul to his thorn in the flesh: "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me." ‡ In neither case do we seem to have reference to actual prayer. His disciples address themselves to Jesus, not because they think of him as another God, but because they realise so intensely his living presence. They know him as the Friend and Protector with whom they can

* Romans 10 : 12; 10 : 13; I Cor. 1 : 2.
† Acts 7 : 59. ‡ II Cor. 12 : 8.

hold converse, and to whom they instinctively appeal in the hour of need. It is surely beside the mark to detect theological motives and analogies with heathen custom in those colloquies with the risen Jesus which were natural to the enthusiastic piety of the early days. What, then, was the nature of that "calling on the name of Jesus" which was the characteristic mark of believers? Perhaps the true explanation is to be sought in one or two passages which connect it more definitely with the rite of baptism.* The rite was accompanied with the confession, "Jesus is Lord," and by so confessing him the convert surrendered himself to Jesus and was brought under his power and guardianship. He was henceforth one of the elect community with the right to address Jesus as "Lord." His confession of that "name" was itself an invocation, insuring that in all prayer which he might offer he would have an advocate with the Father.

If the results of our inquiry have been substantially correct the ordinary estimate of the beginnings of Christianity stands in need of considerable revision. It may be well to indicate briefly the more important points in which a modification of this kind seems to be necessary. (1) There is no sharp line of division, such as is usually drawn, between the teaching of Jesus

* Romans 10 : 12, 13.

and that of the primitive church. The movement initiated by Jesus was continued by his disciples. His own death, so far from arresting it or turning it in a new direction, served only to give it a fresh impetus along the path which he had himself marked out for it. (2) A fuller account must be taken of that apocalyptic atmosphere which was vital to early Christianity. All writers are now agreed that the disciples lived in the daily expectation of the Parousia, but they hardly attempt to realise the significance of that fact. They think of the church, in the first ardour of its tremendous hope, as nothing but an obscure religious society painfully struggling for a foothold. But we have to look not so much at the mere outward conditions of the church as at the consciousness that inspired it. Those followers of Jesus, in their unnoticed gatherings, were filled with the confidence of a great destiny. They believed that they would presently inherit the new age and that a supernatural power was already working in them. We cannot understand the primitive history unless we thus read it from within in the light of the apocalyptic hope. (3) The church began not as a collection of individuals united in the same faith but as a community. As in the former age God had chosen for himself a people, so in his kingdom he would ordain a people to serve him. It had been the aim of Jesus to gather around him this brotherhood of the future, and after his death his

disciples held fast to the communal idea. They constituted the true Israel, which would possess the new age at the Lord's coming. The powers and privileges to which they laid claim belonged to them as a body and were bestowed on the individual believer in so far as he was a member of the body. In the process of time the church hardened into an institution framed and administered like any earthly society, and the doctrine that outside of it there could be no salvation tended to warp and pervert the original Christian teaching. But the doctrine in itself was no perversion. From the beginning the Christian faith was identified with a community into which men required to be adopted before they could participate in the kingdom of God. (4) Notwithstanding its intimate relation with the parent religion, there never was a time when the church was a mere sect of Judaism. Assured of its great calling, it felt itself to transcend the nation. It claimed to be the true Israel in which the age-long travail of the nation had reached fulfilment. Outwardly, it is true, the disciples remained faithful to the Law, but they regarded it as secondary and non-essential. They were conscious, long before the days of Paul, that they stood for a new conception of religion which had little in common with the reigning Judaism. It is significant that of the recorded sayings of Jesus so many are directed against the scribes and Pharisees, the

acknowledged representatives of the Law. The church that treasured these sayings had already grown critical of the Law, and the final break with it was only a matter of time. (5) From the primitive community at Jerusalem the new religion derived its essential beliefs and went forth with them on its gentile mission. There has been a tendency in recent years to lay increasing emphasis on the gentile contribution. According to not a few modern writers, historical Christianity was almost wholly the product of alien forces working on a bare nucleus which was afforded by the faith in Jesus. Now, it cannot be denied that our religion underwent profound modifications when it was brought into contact with gentile thought. It was translated out of the language of Jewish apocalyptic into that of Hellenistic speculation, and the change of form in large measure affected its substance. But the main function of the new influences was to interpret and elucidate what was already given. Behind all the later developments we can discern with sufficient clearness those cardinal beliefs which had come down from the primitive Apostles and ultimately from Jesus himself. (6) It would be misleading to speak of a primitive theology, yet the earliest Christian teaching was far richer in its content than is generally assumed. The belief that Jesus was the Messiah, which is sometimes described as the one distinctive belief of the first disciples,

itself involved a complete recasting of traditional Judaism. It was bound up with a whole complex of new ideas which found their place along with it in Christian faith. In the earliest thinking of the church, although it is known to us in such meagre outline, we can discover the roots of almost all the conceptions which grew to maturity in the century following. There is no evidence that Peter and his companions were men of exceptional religious genius, and in many respects their horizon was a very limited one. But they came in the opening years when the new life of the Spirit was at its flood. They were able to realise their gospel in something of its breadth and fulness and to anticipate, at least in glimpses, the results of the time to come.

The chief share in the creating of a theology out of the intuitions of primitive Christian faith was reserved for the Apostle Paul. His relation to the earlier teaching is a vast and intricate subject which could not be adequately discussed without a detailed analysis of his thought in all its manifold aspects and affinities. For such an analysis, even if it lay within the scope of the present investigation, the data are not yet available. We need a fuller and more accurate knowledge of Paul's debt to Rabbinism, to Greek philosophy, to Oriental religion before we can sift out those elements in his teaching which he drew from the native Christian tradition. But

our inquiry has tended to confirm the conviction, which seems to be growing among New Testament scholars, that Paul is not to be regarded as an innovator, much less as "the second founder of Christianity." It has to be remembered that he began his work in close alliance with the Jerusalem church and that Barnabas, one of the leaders of that church, was his fellow labourer. For at least fourteen years no serious exception was taken to his teaching. Again and again in his Epistles he manifests his anxiety to keep in line with the accepted tradition, and indignantly spurns the possibility that there may be "another gospel." He claims that what had come to him "by revelation" in no way contradicts the message that had been preached by the elder Apostles. In one sense it is true that Paul was a creator. He had been drawn to Christianity through a unique experience, and brought to its service the endowment of a supreme religious thinker. On everything that he touched he left his individual impress and unconsciously turned the whole stream of Christian thought into new channels. But his work, as it appeared to his own mind, was that of expounding and interpreting, and we have no fair reason to doubt that he judged of himself truly. At not a few points his dependence on the tradition is certain, and we should probably find, if our knowledge extended far enough, that he is building almost everywhere

on something that had been given him. It is, indeed, futile to maintain, as some have done, that Paul was nothing but a docile missionary who faithfully reproduced what he had received. The teaching of the church, transmitting itself through his great personality, could not but undergo a change and enrichment. But it is equally false to conceive of Paul as displacing or subverting the earlier Christianity. We ought rather to think of him as its armed soldier through whom it came to its own. He furnished it with new categories whereby it could ally itself with the larger intellectual movement of the age. He broke the bond with Judaism which had prevented it from fully asserting its inherent principles. He construed as reasoned doctrine the beliefs which had rested hitherto on the surmise of faith. Without Paul Christianity could hardly have achieved its victory; but the gospel which he transformed into a world-conquering power had in substance been given to him by the obscure church of the early days.

Paul was the heir of the primitive tradition, and this, in turn, was the immediate outcome of the work of Jesus. It has too often been assumed —and the modern reading of Christian history has been largely controlled by this assumption— that our religion was separated at the very outset from its Founder. In the disaster that overtook

him his message also perished, and his name was employed henceforth to cover a new movement which he himself had never contemplated. But historical Christianity, as we have tried to show, cannot thus be sundered from the work of Jesus. His disciples took up his message of the kingdom and gave it embodiment in the beliefs and institutions of the church. They apprehended it in the apocalyptic forms under which he had proclaimed it, but within this framework they preserved its essential meaning. They associated the coming of the kingdom with a closer relation to God, a higher righteousness, a divine Spirit renewing the lives of men. And as the teaching of the church grew out of the work of Jesus, so did the church itself. He had conceived of the people of the kingdom as forming a new community bound together in mutual love and service, and had called his disciples as the first-fruits of this future brotherhood. After his death they maintained their fellowship. Their individual faith was grounded in the sense of a common inheritance in that kingdom which he was presently to inaugurate. The church of a later time, with its discipline and hierarchies, bore little resemblance to this brotherhood of the first days, yet it rose out of it by a natural development and has never entirely forgotten its origin. At the heart of it there has ever persisted the idea that it is the communion of God's people, sepa-

rated from the world and waiting for the fulfilment of the higher order. It would be mournful to think that the purpose of Jesus was frustrated at the beginning and that the whole labour of the Christian ages has rested on a misconception. From our study of the initial period we may conclude that such a theory is historically false. There was no gulf between Jesus and the church that followed him. His work was continued by those who had understood his message and who built on the foundation which he himself had laid.

INDEX

Acts, plan of, 6
Acts, sources of, 23
Adonis, 95
Agape, 199
Ananias, 138, 140
Antioch, dispute at, 120
Apostles, 147 *f.*
Apostles' creed, 180
Appearances of Jesus, 9 *ff.*, 159
Aramaic, 98

Bacon, 226, 239
Baptism, 162 *ff.*
Barnabas, 131, 138, 140
Batiffol, 35
Beatitudes, 155
Behm, 215
Believers, 106
Breaking of bread, 198
Brotherhood, 133 *f.*, 184
Brotherly love, 135
Brückner, 91

Cæsar-worship, 96
Camisards, 73
Circumcision, 186
Community, the new, 42 *ff.*, 77, 105 and *passim*
Community of goods, 137 *f.*
Confession, baptismal, 98, 105, 180 *f.*, 269
Cornelius, 188
Council, Jewish, 117, 233

Daniel, book of, 47
Deissmann, 214
Diatheke, 214 *f.*
Dibelius, 214
Didache, 155, 175, 209
Disciples, 29
Dispersion, 119

Ecclesia, 29 *ff.*, 113, 241, 264 and *passim*
Ephesians, epistle to, 45
Equality, gospel of, 139
Essenes, 118, 136, 166
Exorcism, 178

Faith, 106, 122, 130

Gamaliel, 117
Gfrörer, 238
Glossolalia, 60 *f.*, 71
Government of the church, 144 *f.*

Hatch, 32
Hebrews, epistle to, 39, 248
Heitmüller, 175, 201, 207
Hellenists, 228, 244
Herod Agrippa, 120, 253

Instruction, 156 *f.*
Interim ethic, 153
Irvingite movement, 73
Isaiah, 66
Israel, 36 *ff.*, 114, 263

James, 104, 149, 253
James, epistle of, 5, 39
Jerusalem, council of, 124 *ff.*
Jerusalem, settlement at, 20, 136
Joel, 65
Johannine writings, 164, 232
John the Baptist, 94, 129, 167
Judaists, 122

Kingdom of God, 42 *f.*, 69, 88

Law, 40, 115 *ff.*
Life of Jesus, 92

Logos, 88
Lombard, 73
Lord, Jesus as, 84 *ff.*, 185
Lord's Prayer, 153
Lord's Supper, 88, 104, 159, 192 *ff.*

Magic, 178
Maranatha, 98
Matthew, gospel of, 31, 51
Matthias, 22
Maurenbrecher, 99
Messianic banquet, 208
Messianic doctrine, 14 *f.*, 18, 88 *f.*, 257 *f.*
Millennium, 103
Miracles, 68
Mithra, 95
Morality, 92
Mosiman, 73
Mysteries, 163
Mysticism, 13

Name of Jesus, 174 *f.*
New birth, 187
New commandment, 135
New law, 48, 159

Oriental cults, 14, 67, 96, 101

Palestinian church, 139
Papyri, 95, 176
Parousia, 159, 268
Passover meal, 196, 204 *f.*
Paul, 2, 3, 7, 12, 86, 90, and *passim*
Pentecost, 58 *f.*, 165
Peter, 120, 145, 148 *f.*
Peter, epistles of, 6
Peter, promise to, 51
Peter, speeches of, 16, 38, 87, 97, 110, 113
Philip, 231
Philo, 61, 118
Prayer to Jesus, 270
Prophecy, 64
Proselytes, baptism of, 166

Qahal, 32

Reign of Messiah, 102
Remnant, 37, 47, 103, 129, 265
Renunciation, 144
Repentance, 173
Resurrection, 9 *ff.*
Revelation, book of, 103
Réville, 201, 214

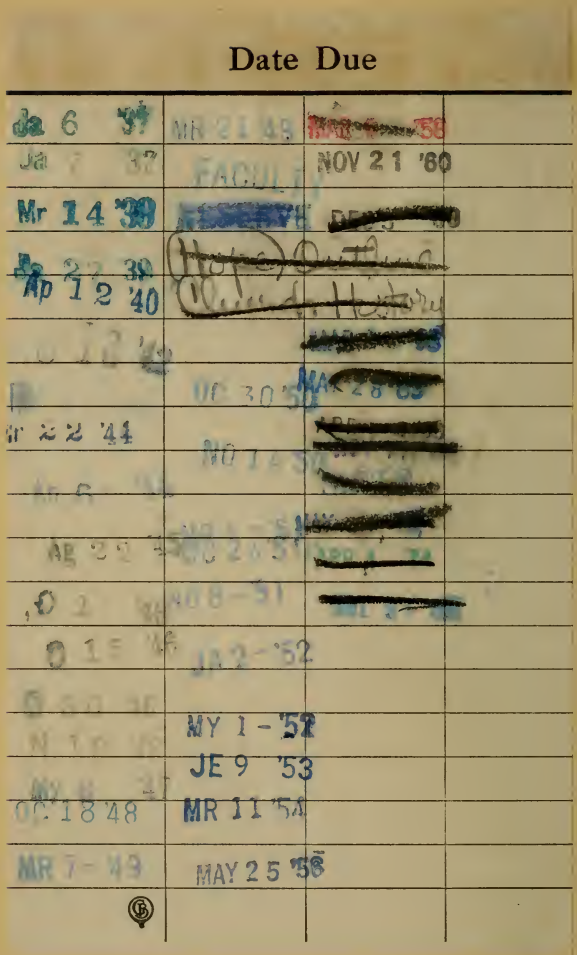
Sacred meal, 193
Saints, 36
Sayings of Jesus, 157 *f.*
Schumacher, 239
Schürer, 34
Seeberg, 154
Serapis, 95
Sermon on the Mount, 159
Sohm, 32
Son of man, 237
Spirit, doctrine of, 62 *ff.*, 130, 146, 266
Spirit, gift of, 57 *ff.*, 187
Spiritual phenomena, 58 *f.*
Spitta, 20, 201, 238
Stephen, 27, 117, 224 *ff.*
Stoning, 233
Synagogue, 32

Teaching of Jesus, 152
Temple, 21, 240 *f.*
Tradition, primitive, 97
Twelve, the, 145 *f.*

Universality of gospel, 52

Volz, 62

Way, the, 151
Wealth and poverty, 139
Weiss, 207
Wellhausen, 207
Wrede, 91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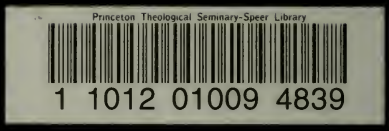
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